

THE BIO-SYLLABUS AFRICAN DIMENSION: THE NEED FOR INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

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A few years ago, precisely in 1985, when the Biopolitics International Organization was nurtured and formed by Dr. Agni Vlavianos Arvanitis, one wondered what dimension the Organization would assume, bearing in mind the fact that the Biopolitics International Organisation (B.I.O.) was founded by a woman. However, today's participation has actually shown that a woman can do more if given the right opportunity and encouragement. Some of you who are attending the conference for the first time may wonder if I say that the B.I.O. recognizes no ideological or geographical boundaries, no East-West, North-South or developed-developing countries. This is because, although this artificial dichotomy does in fact exist, our membership of the Biopolitics International Organization, whose goal is to ignore certain inequalities and seek for better ways of improving bios, which is seen as the basic link of all humankind, justifies the above statement.

International Education

The International University for the Bio-Environment should be an International Center for furthering the understanding of bios. Learning from its beginning to its advanced stage should emphasize the importance of respect for bios in all subjects through co-operation between the different countries of the world. For instance, subjects such as history, literature, architecture, and geography already integrated into the international learning system, should be expanded to reflect the further understanding of bios.

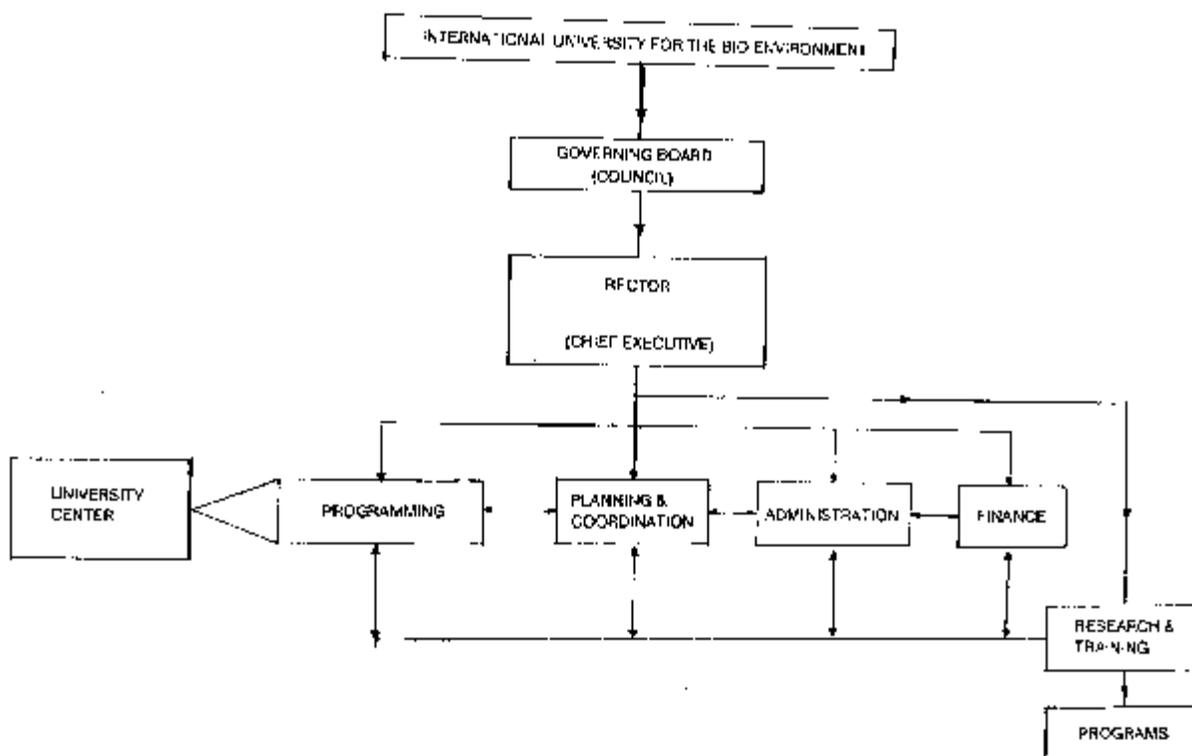


Figure 1: The International University for the Bio-Environment

The bio-syllabus for the I.U.B.E. in the African context should contain a new image of understanding of bios within a defined scope. It is suggested that the syllabus should contain such elements of knowledge that will promote further understanding of the values of bios. The content of the syllabus should aim at playing down on such African customs that are repugnant to equity, good conscience and natural justice. Greater effort is therefore required to project a global understanding of this new form of education.

The I.U.B.E. syllabus should contain elements of understanding that will bridge the technological gap between the nations of the world and

more efforts should be made towards the achievement of a minimum level of uniform understanding of bios through international education. Since education is already an existing phenomenon, bio-education should be seen as an excellent improvement on furthering the understanding of education. It is therefore necessary for the B.I.O. to utilize all the existing techniques in education to project this understanding of bios.

Distance Learning System, for instance, is a modern technique of advancing education which is now widely used in most European countries. Africa is yet to make an inroad into this learning technique. In fact, it was just recently that the Commonwealth Group of Learning chose a university in Nigeria as a base point to start the Distance Learning System. At present, it will be adequate to introduce bio-education through the Distance Learning System which has just come to Africa.

International Cooperation

Understanding bios and its improvement is a matter for all. Through cooperation, and with adequate management of human resources men and women of the world would be given the opportunity of learning from the bio-syllabus. Athens has already provided the base for this learning system. It is, therefore, of utmost importance for members to campaign for a global understanding of the need to preserve bios. When this understanding is achieved, it will mark the beginning of the fulfilment of the B.I.O. goal.

Technologically advanced countries may improve on the existing ways of enhancing the values of bios and the technology acquired so far should not be used for the destruction of bios itself. Perhaps, it is safer here to observe that the concept of the manufacture of machines for heart transplant is a better way of appreciating bio-technological advancement than nuclear weapons made by man for the destruction of life. A typical case of destruction occurred in one of the creeks around Lagos in Nigeria where humans and marine lives were threatened by pollution from a sunken boat loaded with carbide. Large bubbles continued to come out of the boat and offensive odors covered the area and threatened life. The production of such a harmful chemical, whether on a small or large scale, shows a negative effect of man's technological advancement. The bio-syllabus should therefore focus on preservation and protection.

The I.U.B.E. is a well-conceived, timely idea for the decade. The launching of the B.I.O. University in Athens has ushered in a new, concrete dimension in our international learning system. However, more emphasis should be geared towards the concretization of our efforts in order to attain our goals. It will involve the liaison of the B.I.O., with heads of governments and groups, such as the Commonwealth Group of Learning, to project the anticipated goals. As already stated, Athens has offered the base for this new system of learning, and the campaign to bring it to international acceptance should commence with our interaction with the Heads of the various Governments of the World.

In conclusion, I may state that if the I.U.B.E. syllabus comes into operation as conceived by the members of the B.I.O., the syllabus would serve as a unifying force between all forms of life when it is given its proper application. This is because of the multi-disciplinary nature of the bio-syllabus which covers all forms of human endeavour. The syllabus will encourage research, training and dissemination of bio-knowledge. Greater effort should therefore be made towards establishing a minimum level of understanding of the B.I.O. goals among the participating countries for a start. It is suggested that a high-level contact should be made as soon as possible with African heads of state in order to increase awareness of the B.I.O. objectives within the African Region.

Finally, I would suggest that

- A. This forum should pass a resolution giving the President of B.I.O. the mandate to visit as many heads of governments as possible, to inform them on the establishment of the I.U.B.E. and the need for countries to participate in the implementation of the goals of the B.I.O.
- B. This forum should suggest a solution on how the I.U.B.E. should be funded so as to maintain the continuity of its existence.
- C. Distance Learning System should be used as well as other forms of learning techniques in order to bring learning to a wider range of people of the world.
- D. Emphasis should be placed on bio-technology subjects which are geared toward the improvement and preservation as opposed to destruction of bios.
- E. Medium Term Perspective (MTP) Planning over a specific period of years should be used to define a number of specific programmes which the syllabus should achieve. The latter part of the period should be used to evaluate and assess the progress of the I.U.B.E.
- F. A Committee should be established within the I.U.B.E. to study technological methods for dispersing bio-knowledge in both developing and developed countries.

Court of Nigeria. She is also Vice-President of the UN Association of Nigeria, a member of the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, and an ex-member of the Board of Trustees of Southern Africa Relief Fund (SARF).