



EDUCATION FOR A SUSTAINABLE SOCIETY: THE ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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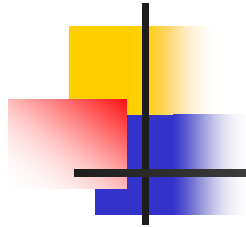
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THE PROMOTION OF SUSTAINABLE SOCIETY: AN IMPERATIVE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

- Many developments and situations in the world are unsustainable! Consequences: succession of endogenous and costly crisis
- Multiple faces of sustainable societies:
 - Economic development (secure prosperity while reducing poverty and saving the environment)
 - Political organizations (incl. respect of democratic values)
 - Social systems (intergenerational solidarity)



- Role of Higher educations institutions (HEI)
 - Developing new knowledge and understanding
 - Transferring knowledge by teaching and promoting learning, as well as knowledge transfer to business and governments
 - Serving society (outreach and solving societal problems)
- In other words, HEIs should be
 - Responsive (to adapt to the rapidly changing world and respond to the needs of their stakeholders), and
 - Responsible.....



RESPONSIBLE HEIs should

- Protect and promote the cultural heritage, as well as the fundamental values of society (democracy, human rights, rule of law, dialogue, among others intercultural)
- Contribute to solve societal problems (climate change, poverty, wars and terrorism, social security, etc...)
- HEIs, in part. Universities, are best placed:
 - They have the knowledge and methodologies
 - Institutional autonomy and academic freedom (if guaranteed) are the necessary conditions for recommendations based on scientific research and independent from political ideologies or financial interests



THE CONTRIBUTION OF CDESR FOR RESPONSIBLE HEIs

- Unique composition: double representation of ministries and academia
- Working methods:
 - Strong bureau reinforced by experts acting as a taskforce
 - Conferences (Forum) with general report and recommendations
 - Recommendations adopted by the Committee of Ministers
 - Books (Higher education series)




■ Main contributions of the CDESIR:

- Active partner of the Bologna process:
 - Inclusion of all European countries
 - Promotion of European values
- Revisited the public responsibility for HE
- Revisited the governance of HEIs
- Promote the quality of HEIs
- Encourage HEIs to promote sustainable societies and democratic values
- Promote intercultural dialogue (the Bologna process should also be seen as a huge network promoting dialogue)
- Will revisit the role of HEIs (flagship program 2007-09)



CHALLENGES

- It is not enough to make nice statements about responsibilities and values!
- Like a happy and long lasting marriage, the respect and promotion of fundamental societal values require permanent attention and action



■ These responsibilities of HEIs (promoting the fundamental values and solving societal problems) are under fierce competition with their two basic tasks:

- teaching and learning (programs are already very dense),
- research (visibility greater with fundamental disciplinary research)

■ Therefore, teachers and researchers consider it difficult and not rewarding professionally to engage (pro-actively) for societal values (at best, they consider sufficient to behave along these values)

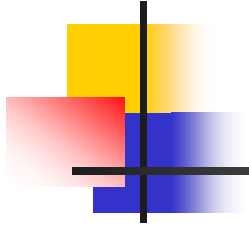


SOLUTIONS

- Governments, international organizations (CoE), university organizations (EUA, ESIB) should promote these values by moral suasion
- However, the best - if not the only - way to modify these behaviors is to introduce financial incentives in order to reward the best projects and “citizens” (special earmarked funding)

TO CONCLUDE: *“If you think higher education is too expensive, try ignorance!”*

- HEIs (universities) are under-funded and overregulated (living with the system of rules and constraints requires a great deal of energy)
- The importance of HE should not only be stated: resources should also be allocated accordingly (and full autonomy granted):
 - It is not only (or mainly) a public finance issue (comparison with US shows that the share to GDP is about the same)
 - But a question of private funding (fees, donations, contracts). Governments should set up the right framework to encourage for alternative sources of funding.



THANK YOU FOR
YOUR ATTENTION