

Report from the Canadian Delegation to the CRE/CEPES European Regional Forum
Palermo, September 24 - 27, 1997

European Agenda for Change for Higher Education in the XXIst Century
Revision: 1998 03 27

**Delegation Report for the CRE/CEPES European Regional Forum to the Council of
Ministers of Education, Canada**

A. Objective of the Forum

The European Regional Forum was organized jointly by UNESCO's European Centre for Higher Education (CEPES) and the Association of European Universities (CRE). The objective of the Forum was to contribute to the mobilization process in Europe leading up to UNESCO's 1998 World Conference on Higher Education (WCHE).

B. Main Themes

The Forum focused on a European agenda for changing the higher education system to meet the needs and challenges of the 21st Century. Within this broad context, the Forum addressed the traditional roles of higher education in Europe which were described as follows:

Teaching and Learning: providing students with the abilities, knowledge and skills required to be proactive in determining their own development and personal future.

Preparation for the World of Work: finding ways to encourage and equip people of various generations with the skills required to gain employment, change careers and meet the needs of the labour market.

Advancement of Knowledge via Research: developing the capacity for innovative thinking and the efficient adaptation of new knowledge for social, economic and scientific purposes and for personal development.

Transmitting European cultural values in a global context: the promotion of both cultural identity and multi-cultural co-operation and action in terms of citizenship and economic and political action, and the successful resolution of the tensions between the two.

Delegates to the Forum were each assigned to one of these four themes and asked to consider the future mission of higher education in terms of improved quality, pertinence and internationalization.

C. Structure

The structure of the European Regional Forum was concise and clear within the short timelines for the event.

Prior to the Forum, each delegate received a paper from Professor John Davies who is the Pro Vice Chancellor and Dean of Graduate School at Anglia Polytechnic University in the United Kingdom. Professor Davies' paper is a comparative analysis of twenty institutional case studies and provided a useful environmental scan for the Forum discussions. A copy of Professor Davies' paper is attached to this report.

The Forum opened on the evening of September 24th with a Keynote Address from Mr. Malcolm Webb the General Manager of Human Resources for PetroFina in Brussels. His recommendations for higher education institutions were: to focus only on a limited number of fields; to become obsessed with customer satisfaction (students, governments and industry) and abandon tenure; to become highly efficient particularly in the selection of students; to invest heavily in educational technology; and to forge new alliances with suppliers, customers and competitors. Mr. Webb's address, "Europe in a Period of Mutation and Change - The Role of Higher Education" is attached and his provocative comments were debated, often with passion, throughout the Forum.

The second phase for the Forum was to explore in detail the themes of Teaching and Learning, Preparation for the World of Work, Advancement of Knowledge via Research and Transmitting European Cultural Values in a Global Context. The exploration of these themes began with presentations from a panel which provided perspectives from key stakeholders. Following the panel discussion, delegates worked in their assigned theme groups. Unfortunately, with approximately 100 participants per theme group, many delegates were not able to express their views during the discussions.

More opportunity for useful discussion was provided in the next phase where delegates worked in groups of twenty or less on a single institutional case study. In many ways this was the most productive phase in the Forum's structure because of the smaller work groups and the more specific focus provided by the single case study.

The next stage was to synthesize the previous discussions into a Declaration on behalf of the participants of the European Regional Forum. A small number of key participants presented the attached draft Declaration on the final day of the

Forum. The final Declaration is to be sent to all Forum participants, but it was not yet available at the time of this report.

The European Regional Forum closed with a wide ranging and inspirational speech from UNESCO Director General, Frederico Mayor, entitled, "The Universal University (The University: the Crucible of Europe)." Dr. Mayor spoke eloquently of the mission and value of higher education within the broader context of the social and economic challenges throughout the world. The text of his speech was not available at the Forum, but is now available on the World Wide Web at <http://www.unesco.org/general/eng/events/speeches/1997/index.html>.

D. Key Participants

The participants at the Forum included Ministers of Education, numerous university rectors or presidents, faculty, students, senior representatives from non-government organizations and government officials. A complete list of the participants is attached.

The key participants at the Forum were:

- Josep Bricall, President of the Association of European Universities
- Frederico Mayor, Unesco Director General
- Antonino Gullotti, Rector, University of Palermo
- Malcolm Webb, Keynote Speaker
- John Davies, Academic Leader for the Forum
- Ulrike Felt, University of Vienna
- Helene Lamicq, President, Université de Paris XII-Val de Marne
- Catalin Samfir, Head of the Romanian Research Funding Council
- Pieter de Meijer, Former Rector, University of Amsterdam

E. Interventions by Canadian delegation

The Canadian delegation consisted of:

- Robert Giroux, President, Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada
- Robert Patry, Coordinator, Council of Ministers of Education

- Jacques Proulx, President, Sous-Commission Education, Commission canadienne pour l'UNESCO
- Jim Soles, Director, Universities and Institutes, Ministry of Education, Skills and Training, Government of British Columbia.

The Canadian delegation met twice daily to discuss and review the events of the Forum. The delegation also held a key meeting with Colin Power, UNESCO Assistant Director General for Education, to discuss arrangements and financing for Canada to host a small North American Forum in Toronto in April of 1998. The meeting was both positive and productive. Finally, Canadian delegates met on three occasions with different student representatives to review their perspectives on the Forum and how students can contribute effectively to higher education planning.

Each member of the delegation participated actively in discussions of one of the four themes and one of the individual case studies. For the Canadian delegation the assignments to themes were: Robert Patry to Teaching and Learning; Jim Soles to the World of Work; Robert Giroux to the Advancement of Knowledge via Research, and Jacques Proulx to Transmitting European cultural values in a global context. In the case studies, Robert Giroux participated in the case study on the Dresden University of Technology, Robert Patry in the case study on the Universite Catholique de Louvain, Jacques Proulx in the Hochschule Bremen case study, and Jim Soles in the case study on the Polytechnic University of Catalunya. A copy of the case study on the Polytechnic University of Catalunya is attached for information.

F. Main Conclusions

The main conclusions of the Forum may be summarized within the four themes which set the structure for the Forum. In general, the issues discussed within these themes and the positions taken by students, faculty, administrators and government representatives were quite familiar to anyone who is involved with these issues in Canada.

Teaching and Learning

The main conclusions within the teaching and learning themes were:

- There is a need for more institutional diversification and for new policies of access to respond to increasing and more diversified demand for higher education.
- Lifelong learning has made it essential to define coherent links in the educational chain for all levels of learning.

- Higher education should pay increased attention to strategies for managing and promoting educational innovation.

Advancement of Knowledge by Research

Robert Giroux provided a Canadian view on the research issues discussed at the Forum with the following observations.

- Research knows no regional nor national boundaries and it will increasingly require sophisticated global communication resources to transmit and apply knowledge and innovation.
- Canada devotes 1.4% of its GDP to research which is low in relation to OECD countries; 25% of its research is done by universities which is a higher proportion than in most OECD countries.
- Universities need support to undertake basic, independent, curiosity driven research since universities are the main source of this research. This support, because of its long term and high risk nature, must come primarily from governments.
- Applied research and the commercialization of research findings is also essential with partnerships between the university corporate sector, industry and governments.
- Canadian universities want to strengthen their research not only to create knowledge and benefit society, but to form future researchers as the human resources necessary for continued innovation. Research is also essential to provide an environment to question current ideas, trends and beliefs which is a critical part of the teaching role. Our graduates must contribute and adapt to change.

World of Work

The provocative keynote speech by Malcolm Webb and his participation as a member of this group contributed to animated discussions from all perspectives.

The main conclusions were:

- There is no contradiction between being learned and being useful and there is a need for universities to prepare students for the world of work because it is based on knowledge.

- The product of universities is knowledge and this product is developed through critical thinking and self learning skills which allow students to adjust to and succeed in a changing labour market.
- The labour market is dynamic and heterogeneous so universities cannot base their long term orientation on strict labour market planning.
- Universities have had a history of thinking and working on their own, but must devote more time to working with partners in business and industry so that programs are relevant.

Transmission of Cultural Values in a European Context

Although the discussions within this theme were set within a European context, they transfer to a North American context as well. The main conclusions were:

- Higher education institutions not only transmit cultural values they often help create them.
- Higher education institutions have a role to play as centres of cultural diversity and understanding.
- Cultural values should be integrated across a broad range of curricula and not limited to special courses.
- The diversity of the learning experience should be enhanced through supporting the mobility of students and faculty to study or work across institutional and political boundaries.

G. Suggestions for Follow-up

The next step for follow-up is for Canada to host a North American Forum in Toronto in April and preparations are well in progress for that event. The participation of the United States in this event and their subsequent participation in UNESCO's 1998 World Conference on Higher Education is essential to meaningful discussion and actions in the higher education field.

Following a successful event in Toronto, Canada should ensure that it is well represented at the 1998 World Conference on Higher Education. In particular, the Canadian delegation for this event should include one or more Ministers of Education.