

Workshop 2
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The 19th and 20th century have seen science separated into disciplines that are increasingly specialized, in order to respond to the needs and evolution of development in all its forms.

Even more, the scientific exploit has progressively and subtly distanced itself from the cultural exploit to respond to the strategic, ideological and economical challenges.

Institutions of higher education have adapted themselves to these changes and have accompanied them in a servile way.

The new university has progressively been built on basis of the model of Humboldt, validating and reinforcing the disciplinary divisions into highly specialized research faculties and structures.

Moreover, in some countries such as France, professionalized, selective and elitist schools were founded outside of the original concept of universities.

At the beginning of the 21st century, humanity is confronted to all kinds of problems, paradoxically triggered by the scientific progress of previous centuries, such as the proliferation of military nuclear, biological and classical arsenals, the industrial development having devastating consequences for the environment, the increase of wealth for the benefit of a small minority of the world population, the threats on cultural diversity. The 21st century's major programs of the United Nations have clearly et objectively defined the goals towards which we must converged to give a chance to our world community.

In particular, I would like to mention the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), including the fight against poverty, exclusion and illiteracy, the programme on "Education for all" and that of "Education for sustainable development".

UNESCO is at the very heart of these actions that allow to effectively achieve the implementation of ambitious but essential objectives.

For this, UNESCO strongly supports that university and more generally speaking higher education, are a force for the attainment of these objectives. It appears therefore indispensable to rethink role and structure of university and higher education in this mission. These need to fully and effectively link the various disciplines, but also preserve both their evolution and own identity.

This ambition concerns not only present and future job training, but also fundamental and applied research. The key words of this evolution, "interdisciplinarity" and even more "transdisciplinarity", need to be better understood and defined, in order that all disciplines can serve their common mission.

Governance and structures of the university must encourage and sustain the dialogue and the interdisciplinary cooperation without self-pretence and without any preconceived ideas. Above all, they must avoid the pitfall of giving in to fads and fashions.

It is then and only then that the words of the mathematician Jacob to his French colleague Legendre will hit their mark. He pointed out that “the sole and real aim of science is to serve the honor of the Human Spirit.”

Questions:

- 1) Is the university today adapted to the Millennium Development Goals?
- 2) Confronted with globalization and the market economy, can the university keep the values and virtues of a maternal figure?
- 3) Can we highlight innovative structures that might serve as bridges between disciplines without having a detrimental effect on their own specificities?
- 4) Can we redeploy the [academic] structures and governance to improve the dialogue with society in all of its diversity without damaging the essential disciplines of freedom and academic responsibility?
- 5) Are new information and communication technologies such as we propose and develop, adapted to the requirements of quality and equality necessary for the new goals of higher education?
- 6) How can one strengthen the capacity of universities to position themselves in a better movement of cooperation marked by solidarity. In particular, using networks that allow an efficient knowledge transfer and genuine solidarity with developing countries? How can such projects be financed? Are university structures sufficiently prepared and adapted for such cooperation?
- 7) What structures are needed for an effective response to the emergence of new types of employment and the concomitant need new types of training?