

ACTION PLAN CRES 2008

INTRODUCTION

It is essential to establish goals and priorities by constructing a strategic agenda for the region when facing the challenges of Higher Education in Latin American and the Caribbean. In view of the conditions and needs of local, national, and global systems it is possible to establish appropriate guidelines to the new realities according to the principles of the Declaration of the Regional Conference on Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (CRES-2008) produced by working groups during CRES 2008.

In spite of important technological advances, the globalized world still shows injustice and social inequality. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to consolidate the role of Higher Education in the region as a strategic factor for sustainable development and fostering social inclusion and regional solidarity to guarantee equal opportunities. Within this context, Higher Education institutions, in the exercise of their autonomy, should assume a clear social commitment and responsibility as public service, supporting the development of science and technology, as well as programs and activities that encourage humanistic aspects leading to comprehensive training and citizenship consciousness.

The values and principles stated in the **Declaration of CRES 2008**, particularly the concepts pertaining to education as a social public good, universal right, and duty of the State, oblige higher education, independently of the juridical nature on institutions of higher education:

- *Strengthen the notion of quality related to relevance and social inclusion;*
- *Develop and foster a culture of democracy and citizenship, in collaboration with previous levels of education;*
- *Strengthen humanistic values fostering a culture of peace, respect for cultural diversity, and the commitment to achieve a humanistic sustainable development;*
- *Generate conditions for dialogue between peers from other regions with an emphasis on South-South cooperation;*
- *Contribute to the solution of the most critical social problems and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.*

Within this perspective, the following the **Action Plan** comprises of five major guidelines:

- 1.- **Expanding** Higher Education undergraduate and graduate levels with quality, relevance, and social inclusion;
- 2.- **Promoting** accreditation, assessment, and quality assurance policies;
- 3.- **Encouraging** educational innovation and research at all levels;
- 4.- **Building** a regional agenda for science, technology, and innovation in order to overcome disparities and promote sustainable development of Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), in accordance to the general policies of Member States;
- 5.- **Supporting** regional Latin American and Caribbean integration as well as the internationalization of higher education through the construction of ENLACES – Latin America and the Caribbean Area for Higher Education, among another initiatives.

In order to adjust higher education policies and initiatives to promote the Action Plan these guidelines, it is important to emphasize the commitment, focus and efforts of the key players involved: governments, Higher Education institutions, networks, and international organizations. Several proposals submitted for the World Conference on Higher Education in Paris 2009 (WCHE 2009) have been highlighted at the end of the document.

GUIDELINE 1

EXPANSIÓN OF COVERAGE WITH QUALITY, RELEVANCE AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

a) RECOMMENDATIONS TO GOVERNMENTS

- To establish and strengthen reliable information systems on Higher Education in order to carry out appropriate diagnoses, offer inputs for public and institutional policies and enabling comparisons between systems. Moreover, it is essential that governments cooperate with UNESCO-IESALC to foster the consolidation of the Map of Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (MESALC) and its implementation in all countries of the region, including Puerto Rico and the countries of the Ibero-American Area of Higher Education Likewise, it is equally important for countries to participate in the UNESCO Portal on Higher Education Institutions.
- To reach the goal of 40% of expected quality coverage by the year 2015, taking into consideration appropriate standards. Currently, gross coverage rate in the region is 32%, and the average percentage for developed countries is 55%. It is recommended that each State defines national coverage goals at undergraduate and graduate levels, as well as strategies to promote geographic de-concentration of offerings based on common efforts among governments of the region.
- To increase government budgets for Higher Education, fostering a policy of recovery of the public sector, especially in countries that exhibit an imbalance in regard to private offerings and implementing appropriate mechanisms of accountability.
- To expand inclusion policies for admission of students in undergraduate and graduate levels, and include new aid mechanisms for students (education grants, financial aid, room and board and healthcare as well as academic monitoring and

vocational and professional guidance). These policies aim to generating equity, decreasing drop-outs, improving student achievements, eliminating training gaps, and fostering digital inclusion.

- To implement inclusion policies for vulnerable populations taking into consideration gender, disabled, indigenous and afro-descendants, including those deprived of their freedom or who live in rural areas, people with scarce resources, migrants, refugees, and other vulnerable populations to ensure their permanence within the institutions.
- To encourage the creation and consolidation of venues for inter-cultural dialogue based on equal rights and mutual respect.
- To thoroughly assess the status of primary and secondary education, in order to increase and update quality in pedagogical innovations, as an efficient manner to assure better training of those who seek higher education.

b) RECOMMENDATIONS TO HEI

- To assume a commitment to attain qualified and inclusive coverage, and implement management mechanisms that provides self-assessment procedures and appropriate accountability.
- To include in their strategies indicators of social responsibility.
- To expand inclusion policies for admission while carrying out institutional support programs for students (education grants, financial aid, room and board, health care, as well as academic monitoring and vocational and professional guidance) aimed at generating equity, decreasing drop-outs, improving student achievement, eliminating training gaps, and fostering digital inclusion.
- To implement, as part of institutional plans, affirmative actions for the inclusion and permanence of minority groups, disabled persons, ethnic groups (indigenous people and afro-descendants), and individuals with scarce resources, workers, refugees, and other vulnerable populations.
- To incorporate an academic monitoring system for students in order to reduce drop-outs and to assure appropriate performance and comprehensive training.
- To develop links for the entire education system, fostering solid cognitive bases and learning on pre-university levels to ensure that students that access Higher Education level already have the values, skills and abilities in order to acquire, construct and transfer knowledge for the benefit of society.
- To incorporate a monitoring system of graduates within the labour market that makes it possible to assess and strengthen the relevance and quality of higher education.
- To contribute with plans for the review and improvement of the primary and secondary levels of national education.

GUIDELINE 2

POLÍCIAS FOR ASSESSMENT AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

a) RECOMMENDATIONS TO GOVERNMENTS

- To promote the consolidation of national assessment and accreditation systems and mutual knowledge, as a strategy that allows translatability between systems and regional integration.
- To review assessment and accreditation models of institutions and programs, as well as models of funds allocation for research and projects in order to respond to recognition and importance criteria of cultural diversity and interculturality with equity, with special attention to differences associated with linguistic, socio-cultural and territorial issues.
- To support the construction and implementation of self-assessment systems in HEI to develop compatible indicators with national policies articulating them with innovative projects that benefit society.
- To incorporate cohesive indicators of national and international cooperation in the accreditation and assessment national system.
- To apply the results of accreditation and assessment processes for the development of public policies in Higher Education.

b) RECOMMENDATIONS TO HEI

- To seek continuous improvement in the implementation of institutional missions based on organizational models and its insertion in the local, national, and regional contexts.
- To foster the creation of an evaluation culture committed to assessment and accreditation systems in order to establish policies, systems, and institutional structures for quality assurance.
- To carry forward innovative and participatory self-assessment processes, including institutional segments with the outside community with transparency and accountability to society.

GUIDELINE 3

EDUCATIONAL INNOVATION

a) RECOMMENDATIONS TO GOVERNMENTS

- To create instruments to enhance educational innovation.
- To promote intercultural education and produce statistics to measure the participation of students, teachers, and researchers, especially indigenous and afro-descent individuals in higher education.
- To motivate professors by providing career plans and salary compensation levels, promoting continuous training and appropriate conditions to achieve professional performance.
- To foster the use of ICTs throughout the education system and promote virtual education with appropriate quality assurance mechanisms.
- To create regulatory and support mechanisms to encourage entrepreneurial vision and educational innovation.

- To organize working groups comprised of Higher Education institutions experts and government specialists in order to move forward in the process of educational innovation.
- To bring together teams of Higher Education institutions experts and government specialists to consolidate the process of educational innovation.

b) RECOMMENDATIONS TO HEI

- To develop new curricula, educational models, and academic strategies with attention to the new contexts, comprehensive training and the relations between professionals and the labor-market; to provide more choices for students within the educational systems, with flexible curricula to facilitate their movement within the structure, to promote new paths including inter-disciplinary, multi-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary perspectives that allows an exchange with other national and international institutions.
- To broaden continued education offerings as a goal to generalize life-long learning higher education.
- To foster permanent capacity building for professors in new instruction/learning models, providing skills to work in complex educational environments, with heterogeneous groups, or individuals of diverse cultural and social backgrounds.
- To assure interaction and commitment with other levels of instruction, contributing to the quality of primary and secondary education and to the eradication of illiteracy, by enhancing training at all levels of education, including formal and informal sectors, technical degrees and programs compatible with employment.
- To foster the use of ICTs in higher education, to increase offerings of distance education, creating support centers and innovative models such as joint programs, modular courses and certification by modules among others in order to modernize academic practices, increase coverage of HE, diversify offerings and democratize access to knowledge.
- To establish and support lines of research aimed at attempting educational innovations at different moments of the educational process, from curriculum design to academic experiences in the fields of learning and instruction and “learning to learn” programs.
- To strengthen social and humanities studies, which are the crosscutting keys areas to best prepare students in all university courses.

GUIDELINE 4

REGIONAL AGENDA OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION (STI)

a) RECOMMENDATIONS TO GOVERNMENTS

- To increase public investment in science, technology and innovation (STI), with the goal to reach at least 1% of GDP within the next five years. In the case of countries that have already reached this level, to continue raising the percentage of investment.

- To foster cooperation for advanced knowledge production between the scientific teams and local teams through different mechanisms that incorporate added-value knowledge in the local production.
- To encourage the creation of capacities of STI in strategic areas of knowledge, improving database creation and endogenous scientific-technological platforms and to promote collaboration and development of strategic network projects, particularly in South-South and North-South-South regional cooperation.
- To strengthen and foster graduate programs in the region with specific resources establishing academic exchange and promoting the creation of regional graduate and research programs between institutions from different countries.
- To support and encourage PhD programs to increase the number of experts in all areas of knowledge, with emphasis on sustainable development and regional integration as strategic areas of the country.
- To disseminate and propel scientific knowledge throughout society, instigating scientific curiosity and the culture of innovation among young people.
- To implement a national policy for scientific and technological development, creating legal frameworks and appropriate support mechanisms in order to build a national STI system that stimulates cooperation between governments, universities, research centers and the productive system.
- To promote the implementation of methods for technology and innovation transfer between local and regional players to enhance the production of goods and services and increase national and regional competitiveness.
- To strengthen technical and technological education.
- To create mechanisms to assist STI investments in the private sector.

b) RECOMMENDATIONS TO HEI

- To establish institutional policies to promote research and innovation, including incentives for professors, researchers and students, and creation of mechanisms for the dissemination of results, scientific initiation programs, among others.
 - To create institutional mechanisms for the transfer of knowledge and innovation such as incubators, curriculum for the preparation of entrepreneurs, technology parks, and policies for the protection of intellectual property, among others.
 - To create mechanisms for STI development at institutional levels in alliance with public and private sectors reassuring the relevance of research.
 - To actively participate in the national STI system, with the specific functions of Higher Education.
 - To promote social and cultural studies, strengthening its own perspectives on how to approach problems, responding to challenges in human rights, social-economic and cultural areas, equity, distribution of wealth, multicultural integration, participation, democracy building and international equilibrium, as well as the enrichment of our national heritage.
 - To commit to regional development, offering solutions to social problems taking into consideration the Millennium Development Goals as their own.
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GUIDELINE 5

REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND INTERNATIONALIZATION

a) RECOMMENDATIONS TO GOVERNMENTS

- To implement policies and actions for the integration of Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean, fostering the Latin American and Caribbean Area of Higher Education (ENLACES).
- To reject the use of education as a commercial service within the framework of WTO agreements, and regulate the foreign capital investment in national higher education institutions.
- To highlight cross-border offering of Higher Education, analyzing specific regulatory measures, to monitor the foreign capital investment and to implement appropriate systems of assessment and accreditation in the Higher Education institutions which are set up in the region.
- To prevent and avoid brain-drain, implementing measures and public policies to retain and repatriate qualified individuals and to facilitate their integration into national development projects, as well as creating better options that encourage the permanence and good use of talents. Moreover, official agreements for training abroad should include dimensions such as reciprocity and obligations of in-country service for graduates, including conditions for employment integration in projects of interest.
- To provide the creation of an alumni network comprised of students who participated in internationalization programs, but who currently work abroad, in order to encourage collaboration between their current institution and institutions in their native countries.
- To facilitate the incorporation of Latin American individuals, who received their degree abroad and currently work abroad, in participating in networks and graduate programs according to their qualifications.
- To support the creation of wider exchange programs between Higher Education institutions of the region, enabling professors, researchers, students, and administrator's mobility to promote integration and offering solutions to barriers such as lack of financing, visa procedures, and enrollment among others.
- To revise the 1974 Regional Agreement for the Recognition of Studies, Degrees, and Diplomas of Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean.
- To promote solidarity-based internationalization of Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean, strengthening existing programs for cooperation and integration in the region, and establishing alliances for the development of scientific-technological activity, considering the definition of regional priorities favoring the efforts of different countries with the use of specific funding programs and improvement of scientific quality of our institutions in order to slow down brain-drain.
- To strengthen the convergence process of national and sub-regional assessment and accreditation programs with the purpose of creating regional standards and procedures to ensure quality of higher education and research and to promote their social and public role.

- To establish mechanisms for increasing cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean, with emphasis on regional cooperation with African countries and small island nations.
- To support university networks, regional higher education institutions, and the liaison role of UNESCO-IESALC.
- To develop joint initiatives of regional interest with regional and global university networks.
- To promote a better use and connection of HE to the international cooperation for sustainable development.

b) RECOMMENDATIONS TO HEI

- To promote a strategy of internationalization and international cooperation, and implement proposals for integration.
- To implement programs of solidarity-based cooperation with higher education institutions of Latin America and the Caribbean, with special attention to developing countries.
- To strengthen the ties to allow productive interrelations in the areas of instruction, extension, and research, leading to cooperation that fosters the Latin America and Caribbean region to act as a block before the world.
- To produce specific policies to offer attractive options to foreign students in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, as a strategy for cultural dissemination and development of an international environment in higher education institutions.
- To increase and actively participate in networks and think-tanks about the key problems of higher education within the framework of integration of Latin America and the Caribbean.
- To encourage and consolidate academic association between graduate programs, strengthening training activities, facilitating the mutual recognition of credits, and stimulating joint degrees and cooperative graduate programs, particularly in strategic areas.
- To promote training of qualified human resources in the management of regional integration, and solidarity-based international cooperation to ensure continuity and quality.
- To foster instruction and research in areas related to the integration of Latin America and the Caribbean, sustainable development, intercultural studies, the knowledge and recognition of the value of our cultural and environmental heritage, and the study of contemporary phenomena.
- To build technical and negotiation skills in order to participate more actively in opportunities that generate international cooperation for sustainable development.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO NETWORKS

- To widely disseminate the Declaration of CRES-2008 and the Action Plan so that network members will accept them as reference and support joint initiatives, with the same objectives, with global university networks.

- To support implementation of the Action Plan through member activities, seeking synergies with other networks and other involved players for the productive articulation of efforts.
- To cooperate with UNESCO-IESALC in the implementation, follow-up, and assessment of the Action Plan.
- To contact African universities and networks in order to develop joint programs and discussion points for the World Conference on Higher Education in Paris (WCHE-2009).
- To contribute to the organization and development of ENLACES.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

- To adopt the principles of the Declaration of CRES-2008.
- To support implementation of the Action Plan and its activities.
- To support regional meetings for the establishment of ENLACES, and similar initiatives, seeking to strengthen complementarities and synergies between them.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The region should strengthen the role of UNESCO-IESALC as the main organization that coordinates integration policies in the region in the area of higher education, and as a permanent forum of discussion and debate, promoter of inter-institutional agreements, research focused on the sustainable use of strategic resources, and others. It is UNESCO-IESALC's responsibility:

- To disseminate the results of CRES-2008 among governments, institutions of higher education, and other relevant actors, including the Final Declaration and Action Plan for the region.
- To offer visibility and articulate initiatives of countries, networks, associations, institutions of higher education, international organizations, sub-regional and inter-regional entities within the framework of the Declaration of CRES-2008 and the guidelines of the Action Plan for Latin America and the Caribbean.
- To establish contacts between other players such as: university networks and associations of the region, global university networks, organizations such as CAN, ALBA, MERCOSUR, CAB, RIACES, CARICOM, SICA, the Ibero-American Forum of Higher Education, SELA, projects such as TUNING and 6x4, universities and regional programs such as UWI, UNILA, Universidad del Sur, FLACSO, CLACSO, CYTED/RICYT, requesting a list of specific activities to be carry forward within the framework of the Action Plan for cooperative efforts in the region.
- To jointly develop with interested regional players in higher education, science, technology, and innovation, the agenda of intermediary meetings between CRES and WCHE in which activities proposed by these players in regards to the Action Plan for the region will be discussed.
- To establish follow-up/monitoring, and implementation mechanisms for the proposals of CRES-2008 stated in the current Action Plan.

- To request that the themes of CRES 2008 be included in the Ibero-American Summit of Chiefs of State at the OEI.
- To create a higher education observatory under UNESCO to study the commitments assumed by countries in the WTO and informing about its development and results.
- To submit the Declaration of CRES-2008, the Action Plan and the proposals of the region for higher education in the world during the World Conference on Higher Education - WCHE 2009.



PROPOSALS OF THE REGION FOR WCHE (Paris, 2009)

- *To reiterate, as fundamental principles, the values stated in the Declaration of WCHE-1998: education as a public good; quality, relevance, and social inclusion; and international solidarity.*
- *To request that governments act in favor of higher education as a right, and not as a marketable service within the framework of the World Trade Organization.*
- *To support member countries in the implementation of measures to regulate cross-border education offerings and the acquisition of institutions of higher education by foreign companies.*
- *To encourage that member countries implement agendas of science, technology, and innovation for sustainable development that reduce the gap between developed and developing countries.*
- *To carry out measures to prevent and avoid brain-drain and implement actions that seeks to create conditions of balance between developed and developing countries.*
- *To support cooperation between national and regional accreditation and assessment systems.*
- *To foster the creation of funding support for South-South and North-South-South cooperation, with special attention to African countries and island nations.*

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