

UNIVERSITY COOPERATION AND HUMANITARIAN CRISES

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Abstract : *One of the basic challenges of the 21st Century is assuring international peace and fostering development, in the light of the new World balance. Today, there are problems that can only be solved by action at the global level. New strategic thinking is required to approach global issues and advance “global public goods”. Consequently, international communities must become protagonists of a new strategy to intervene in crisis areas and to promote peace, human rights and development with a strategy based on realistic and effective foreign common policy. Such a strategy must include the collaborative efforts of diplomatic, economic and peace forces actions, while being rooted in the common goal of development of a strong cooperation culture of solidarity capable of understanding local needs and providing quick and efficient solutions that are at once professional and respectful of human dignity. Such a strategy must rely on cultural expertise and include expert knowledge of the theoretical elements of crisis and development management and the capability to understand the real comprehensive needs of the populations, and their historical and cultural roots in order to give effective answers to them, and to promote peace and development even in the first phases of the interventions.*

I - The New Challenges of the University Cooperation for Peace

A competent and comprehensive response requires a multidisciplinary approach. In every university cooperation programme for peace it is necessary to take into account that the objective of an action aiming to analyse the situations must take into consideration the cultural context, in order to advance the technical and cultural objectives of the cooperation.

Universities can play a significant role in this new strategy for humanitarian affairs, if they build partnerships with other relevant actors, including international organizations, diplomacy, peace forces and NGOs. Universities should not act as elite, far removed from real problems and challenges. On the contrary, universities and their faculty should be engaged in the field and share their expertise and knowledge as well as learn from other actors.

The traditional “*academic collaboration*” is distinct from the “*university cooperation for peace and development*” understood as a strategy of action aimed to build a more developed and peaceful society. In fact, university cooperation needs to manage and deal with a double problem of independence in order to face the challenges to which it is called: from one side, it has to tackle the problem of research, didactics and operational services naturally built into the academic structure; from the other, it has to deal with the necessity of reconciling technical- scientific interventions, that must be tailored to the real demands of the local populations whose needs become are gradually discovered as the project proceeds. When we speak about university cooperation we don’t refer only to the exchange of lecturers and researchers - which is usually the objective of traditional forms of academic collaboration - although this kind of activity may be very useful. University cooperation implies a more general strategy based on both analysis and action, of training and research in the field, of cooperation among the academy and civil institutions, diplomats and international organizations, volunteers and peace forces, in order to provide support in both the prevention and solution of crisis promoting future development.

II - Governance of World Crises

While it seems very difficult to give efficient answers to many dramatic events of our age, we are wondering how to face the present big *world-wide emergencies and crises* which affect mainly the poorest countries of the world or those countries where processes of democratisation are often starting in dramatic situations of civil war or ethnic conflicts. Moreover, it happens very often, that catastrophic events like earthquake, epidemics, volcanic eruption take place in these countries and upset even more the already dramatic conditions in which millions of human beings are living. In fact, if an event of this happens in these countries, we could say that a *crisis in the crisis* is taking place. The crises in Middle East and in Afghanistan, the conflicts in Ex Yugoslavia, in Somalia and in the Central Africa (Lakes District), the chronic unsuccessful of many international programmes in the last crises, teach us that weapons and astonishing military attacks in countries where the people is armed only with their misery, or where the ethnic conflicts divided the populations with dramatic consequences for the new processes of democratisation, can't solve these problems or give relief to these people pain.

On the contrary, with interventions planned referring to a strategy of prevention and co-operation, moved by a real goodwill to respect the human rights, it is possible to foster the peace and the peace is the first step to build up real and useful humanitarian processes of aid. Social and cultural approach with a real diplomacy of peace is in fact the basic conditions that help each citizen to participate freely in the reconstruction of his country and of his own future as well. It is easy to understand that the humanitarian crises need an always new approaching strategy more and more in line to these situations, especially when destructive events, conflicts or civil wars throws such unstable the social balance into confusion.

If one of the basic challenges of the 21st Century is, undoubtedly, international peace and security in the light of the new world balance, there are problems today can only solved by collective action at global level: there is a new thinking on the way to approach global issues for a "global public goods". New problems, new perceptions with specific solutions. This approaching strategy is a matter of culture as it is made not only of perfect knowledge of the theoretical elements of crisis management of humanitarian crises, but also of the capability to understanding the real comprehensive needs of these populations, theirs historical and cultural roots in order to give efficient answers, promoting the development even the first phases of the aid. For this reason, the international community must propose itself as a protagonist of a new strategy to intervene in crisis areas, a strategy based on a real and adequate foreign policy and on a common security policy. Such strategy must represent not only the expression of diplomatic, economic and military action, but also be able to set its roots in the common goal of development a strong humanitarian culture of solidarity capable of understanding providing quick and efficient answers in human and professional terms.

III - University Cooperation and Humanitarian Crises

In this context, the university assumes a central position and particular importance. First of all, because the university is the main place where to educate and to promote in the new generations the achievement of human rights which are the basic elements to spread in the society the development of a real culture of respect of human being and solidarity. Moreover, the university has a role to give to their students the capability to understand the importance of dedicating their professional skills in humanitarian issues. The emergency situations are more and more involving us and let us understand what a mature and developed society is able to give in terms of human, scientific and organising mobilisation.

The central position of the university doesn't mean a sort of elitist action even if it could seem like this. What we could like to point out is, on the contrary, that only the enlargement of human mind through the scientific research, enriched with the personal experience on the field, can foster a more careful analysis of the problems and broad-minded approach to the human being and his needs when is in the emergency situations. This university methodology is useful instrument to stimulate the co-operation between people and between individuals.

It seems anyway to be the case of underling that when we speak of *university co-operation* in the field of humanitarian crises we don't want to mean the only exchange of lectures and researchers which is usually done in the academic collaboration, even if also this kind of activity seems to be useful. *University co-operation* is in fact a more general approaching strategy which is made of analysis and action jointed together, of training and research on the field in co-operation between academic world and civil institutions, international organisations, volunteers, etc. in order to make possible prevention of crises and humanitarian assistance at the same time. That is to say it is not enough to be an expert of this specific field in order to work out such a programme.

In any humanitarian crises the effects of the consequences of the catastrophic events involve the whole social community life thus requiring a comprehensive answer with a multidisciplinary approach. The social life is not something added to the existence of human being but primary need of this natural as well as his protection and development in term of quality and security. Moreover, throughout the relationship and interaction with other people and public institution services the human being develops his personality. In every humanitarian programme it is necessary to take into account that the objective of an action aiming to analyse the humanitarian crises needs, must serious take into consideration, these issues, towards which the technical and cultural objective of all social organisation and their services must be directed.

IV - The Global Responsibility

It seems to be necessary, to strengthen university training co-operation program on humanitarian affairs and crisis management analysing with a multidisciplinary approach the causes in which they happen to explode in crisis areas. Such training must be given to the students through courses in which tackles the humanitarian affairs in an integral way and through interdisciplinary – multidisciplinary didactic modules putting them in strict connection with new and efficient strategies.

This approach is particular required in crisis areas where the impact of the events may be regarded populations already suffering social and economic chronic deprivations. It is not very easy to organise these programmes because it's necessary a very good experience with a personal human and professional maturity which are the most important aspects of the workers in this areas.

This is also the urgent reason why it is essential to think over the role of university, which in addition to devoting itself to education and research, has to be able to educate for peace and civil cohabitation. In this regards, we don't need only well-trained experts with the capability of working out fast and efficient interventions, but we need also of people with this capability of understanding the different human situations offering to the needing populations efficient and rapid answers. All of this requires a real new role of university, which it is not only thought of a place where people can exchanges ideas and deepen culture, but also and above all as an institution actively engaged in serving society.

Interdependence, international co-operation, solidarity and collaboration between different institutions, International Organisations and Academic World are key-concepts to be practised in order to be able to prevent and to face these emergency and humanitarian crises, to carry out rapid and efficient programmes. The *global society*, which we are often speaking about, will not exist until we will get used to referring to these concept of *global responsibility* in our everyday lives.

V - Conclusions :

A. Cooperation strategies between universities, governments and citizens in strengthening good governance, locally, nationally and regionally.

Universities in developing countries have unique challenges and constraints including often complex relationships with their governments. The knowledge and expertise which universities develop over time can also be placed at the service of governments who are undertaking complex reforms. Academics can provide government officials with in-depth policy options and advise them on how to conceptualize, design, implement and monitor reform projects. This happens in many developed and developing countries in various areas. However, it is important to discuss whether professors are neutral in providing policy advice and whether they are always best placed to advise governments.

B. The role of universities in leadership development

Universities and institutes of higher education are the nurturer of society's next generation of leaders. In this age of globalization, the university's first task is to produce global citizens who are competent not only to 'conquer the marketplace', but also to understand and live in harmony with other cultures within its national borders and without. To fulfil this task, universities must be vigilant about emerging issues and trends in order to refine and, at times, reinvent their own curriculum to equip their students with needed life skills. There are universities that have been developing programs on management of innovative processes directed to top-level government officials.

In general, leadership enhancement programs must be conceived and implemented with the aim of making leaders capable of effectively addressing the key issues of the 21 century. Given the increasing complexity of issues governments are faced with, leadership training needs to be interdisciplinary, international and inter-sectorial (involving public and non-profit organizations). Leaders have to develop cross-sectorial approaches to solving problems, including poverty reduction. Taking into account the present political environment in an increasing globalizing world, new areas of leadership competency need to be strengthened, in particular: diversity management; knowledge management; communication and ICT skills; horizontal management; results oriented performance management; resource and information management; partnerships and negotiating skills.

The focus on the role universities can play in providing leaders with adequate skills and tools to tackle complex and challenging tasks and in developing continuous learning programs. The need for reform within universities will also be explored. Particular attention will be devoted to discussing how universities can ensure that their approaches and strategies in training and education respond to the effective needs of leaders.

C. The role of universities in situation of humanitarian crisis and post-conflict reconstruction: challenges, priorities and prospects

The role of universities can be very important not only in creating the conditions for democratic dialogue, intellectual development, and citizenry but it can also play a significant role in providing

support to emerging and actual conflicts. Universities have the potential to make valuable and diverse contributions at different phases of the conflict cycle. The expertise residing in university faculties, teaching and research departments has historically played its part in responding to natural disasters and humanitarian crisis, assisting in peacemaking and providing human resources for post-conflict reconstruction.

There are, however, also many challenges facing universities in these situations. In some cases, especially in post-conflict societies, universities as other institutions have been either devastated or are not functioning as they should. The question then is how to rebuild universities in this context. Moreover, in debating North-South mechanisms of collaboration, in particular in war torn societies, it is necessary to bear in mind that not always universities from the North are able to understand the complexities of highly divided societies and collaboration might not be as productive as one would hope for.

D. Experiences on cooperation programmes between universities and other organizations

Universities in developing countries offer great expertise and resources to crisis situations which can be shared, especially at the regional level. Many universities are developing unique innovative Programmes, have experienced faculty members, and offer valuable resources for partnerships with international agencies.

There are tremendous potential synergies for new linkages and collaboration. Universities are also developing full Peace Studies departments or at least special units or Concentrations within the traditional fields of international affairs and the like. Rather than separate the subject from the mainstream, some universities are going further by integrating conflict resolution skills directly into the curriculum of a broad range of professional studies, i.e. teacher training, law, human rights, business and public management, development studies, and other related fields.

Similarly, universities have a deep reservoir of knowledge to share with students from other countries. These 'foreign or international' students acquire skills and professions greatly needed in their own countries, but they are equally a resource for the national students to learn about the developing world. Foreign students are also great resources and connectors for the university to link with students' local communities in developing countries.

E. Academic Collaboration is distinct from University Cooperation

Universities can play a significant role in this new strategy, if they build partnerships with other relevant actors, including international organizations, diplomacy, peace forces and NGOs. Universities should not act as elite, far removed from real problems and challenges. On the contrary, universities and their faculty should be engaged in the field and share their expertise and knowledge as well as learn from other actors.

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