

The Action Plan should promote the decentralization and relevancy of education as ways to improve the quality of education. However, such an approach does not mean that countries should be freed of their responsibilities to establish, in cooperation with locally-based education systems, common education standards. In doing so, however, we must recognize that "common standards" do not equate to "uniformity". In the case of technical skills and professions, the Action Plan should encourage a closer collaboration with industry in order to better equip people for the evolving world in which they live and work.

Relevancy:

The Action Plan should ensure that education is rooted in its local cultural context. This principle is especially important for indigenous groups and minorities for which education was frequently used by colonial powers as a tool of assimilation.

Education systems should incorporate traditional knowledge and be more respectful of local conditions. These systems should make it easier for groups to conduct their own research into what they believe is relevant to their education. Some knowledge is grounded in a particular culture and education systems should, in order to respond to new realities, incorporate all points of view which can be useful.

Education, to be truly relevant, should acknowledge the links between formal and informal education, incorporate democracy and respect for human rights into its process, promote sustainable development and seek to alleviate poverty.

As there is value in learning that does not necessarily lead to degrees, Canada should try to ensure that there is some mention of informal mechanisms for education in the final Action Plan. This should include mechanisms that lead to the reinsertion of individuals into productive society. There is a need to ensure that people are prepared for the evolving nature of their work environments.

Equity:

Education systems must seek equality of access as well as equality of benefits. Benefits do not accrue from an educational system that destroys a culture. References to globalization or hemispheric integration should not simply refer to the universality of Spanish or English. People from all cultural groups of society should be able to use their knowledge, function in their own language and be given the opportunity to share their cultural experiences with others for the benefit of all.

In the Americas, access to primary education is an issue of vital importance to most countries.

Addressing the issues posed by the relevancy of education will in turn address issues related to equity of access to education among marginalized groups and equity of benefits accrued from education.

Canadian Aspects:

Canada has valuable experience to offer in terms of distance education, both through traditional means or through new educational technologies.

One of the greatest and most immediate contributions of the new communication technologies is that they can be