

TO BID ON THE FUTURE

It is natural that each person observe the world from his or her own perspective, given largely by training and activities. But the most determinant factor of the progress and wellbeing of people is education. Notwithstanding the importance of health and nourishment and for some people, unfortunately, that of wealth and military power, it is the education of past generations that led to the present situation and it is the education of future generations that will allow reach the desired quality of life.

For the training of students and for progress in general all the branches of knowledge are relevant. The sciences acquire particular relevance in aspects such as health and industrial development, areas that become ever more dependent on the advances in science and technology.

Governments assign an important weight to education and in some fortunate cases the respective budgets surpass those of defense. In every instance, the core issue of education is coverage, and sometimes the training and quality of teachers is neglected. In some countries, as is the case of Venezuela, there is a deep crisis, a true tragedy, in high school science teachers' training, the percentage of teachers in training being negligible.

In the year 2010 the main teacher training institution in the country had over 100,000 undergraduates and over 10,000 graduate students, but a minute proportion of them followed careers in chemistry, biology, math or physics teaching. Few are being prepared for the teaching of English, a language that has become a need for international exchange in science, technology, trade and industry.

A good part of the effort required to overcome this crisis can and should be accomplished by the scientific community. An example that merits analysis is Project 2061, carried out since 1985 by the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS). The number that identifies this project is an excellent example of the meaning of 'to bid on the future'. That is the year when there will be a new opportunity to observe the Haley comet as it draws near our planet, after having done so in 1985. It symbolizes the need to train youth for the future.

Project 2061 is a long-term initiative that pursues the improvement of the educational system so as to help people become literate in science, mathematics, and technology. To this end, it develops tools and services that can be used by educators, researchers, and policymakers in order to improve the educational system. It establishes goals and develops curriculum materials for the teaching and learning of sciences, directing its emphasis to the training and professional development of teachers and, thus, to improve student achievement.

Although the improvement of working conditions and salaries for the teachers is not in the hands of the scientific community, a lot can be done for the betterment of science teachers, producing textbooks, organizing professional improvement workshops and helping in the design of curricula and teaching practices. The Association for the Advancement of Science members of the Interciencia Association are called to play a leading role in this field in their respective countries.

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