

EDUCATION CREATES NEW AMBIENCE

Training program assists the rural population of Columbia with goal-oriented teaching units

Columbia is characterised by a high rate of crime and violence as well as extreme poverty, rural exodus and lacking access to education. While developing suitable training programs, one was confronted with great difficulties. In the year 1974 professors and students of the University Del Valle in Cali, Colombia, started a field test and tried a new way of knowledge transfer with a group of approximately 20 youth. The NGO Fundaec, Fundación para la Aplicación y Enseñanza de las Ciencias (foundation for the application and teaching of the sciences), was established. The goal was to develop, together with the rural population, a school system conceived for the local circumstances, which would teach the people those abilities that will enable them to cause a change as Promoter of Community Wellbeing in their rural or urban surroundings.

Customized educational programs

Fundaec brings together the traditional knowledge of the natives with the potentials of modern science and intellectual insights. On this basis, it does research, trains and promotes concrete projects. The fields of research and activity include agriculture, education, technology, business foundations and community development.

Demonstration project

Fundaec was praised by Professor Ernst Ulrich von Weizsäcker as being one of the best pedagogic projects and is a world-wide EXPO 2000 project. It is based on a positive image of man. The basic prerequisite is the conviction that man himself is the key to escaping his apparent hopelessness. The curriculum recognized by the education ministry includes three stages. The conclusion of the third stage is equivalent to a high school diploma.

Teaching and learning without hierarchies

A network of approximately 40.000 students takes part in a decentralized education system which enables them to establish local projects and structures for the improvement of the community life. If the demand for a school group exists somewhere, a person with a high school diploma is chosen who is willing to conduct a group of 10 - 25 tutors. The tutors receive training, teach later and form an atmosphere of learning without hierarchies.

The curriculum is interdisciplinary. During their education the students can remain in their home community and utilize their acquired knowledge in the daily work. In order to integrate the experience of the village community into the project, group consultations have been introduced.

Fundaec has good prospects

Fundaec has also developed in over 30 years. Today, there are three big branches. Besides the school system introduced here, a university was established in 1990 offering an education that lasts for approximately six years. As a third working branch, Fundaec has called into being agrarian production facilities. In specific courses the population learns how to further process native products and how to sell them at the market.