

UNESCO-CEPES in conversation with Professor Suren Zolyan Rector of Yerevan State Linguistic University “Bryusov”

1. In your opinion, what is the institutional responsiveness to globalization in the field of education in your country?

Taking into consideration that our country is very small and the educational institutions are not so large, it is quite natural that universities of our Republic could operate only in a broader context. Once it used to be the Soviet Union: now after Bologna it is, as we call it, the European Higher Education Area. In fact the scarcity of financial, technical as well as material and human resources are very serious problems for many universities. In 1990 when Armenia became independent, we lost the continuity of educational system; and currently for us it is of high priority to develop our links with other universities and share the experience.

2. Do you believe that the current globalization trends require a new generation of intercultural teacher educators?

Armenia in this respect has a unique status, as it has always been a crossroad of cultures, and that is probably why cross-cultural education in our educational system has become traditional. Taking into account that the mission of our University is to create bridges between Armenia and the world, we prepare specialists, who educate the new generation teaching them to communicate in other languages and through other cultures; while preserving the typical elements of Armenian nation.

3. How do you believe students and academics should be prepared/ trained for the intercultural aspects/content of their disciplines?

Given that we are in the field of humanities, there is hardly any subject, which doesn't have a cultural component; today there should be an appropriate approach to foreign language teaching methodology; called language through culture. The same applies to other subjects, such as journalism, tourism, international relations, where the intercultural component is considered to be dominating. Moreover, in Yerevan State Linguistic University “Bryusov” there is a separate specialty, which is called linguistics and intercultural communication.

4. To what extent do you see multilingualism as a must in higher education today?

If it refers to higher education, we need to distinguish professional fields. There are areas, such as mathematics, the study of art, music, which have their language and are understandable to everyone and do not require any translation, and here multilingualism is mainly considered to be means of communication. But when it comes to Humanities, then it is difficult to imagine a specialist who doesn't study literature in other languages. For example it is essential to know foreign languages when dealing with legal terminology. In fact we can't ignore the importance of multilingualism in our globalizing world as it is one of the dominant components in communication, science, business, diplomacy etc.

5. How do you see the current inter-university dialogues and cooperation under the Bologna Process/European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and beyond?

I believe there is a lot to be done. Grounds have been established for the development of these dialogues, we can use the experience of others, meanwhile others can use our experience, but we must confess that there are financial, political and other problems that impede the progress in European Higher Education Area. But we must understand that in order to achieve results we need time. It would be naive to expect immediate and tangible results.

6. Do you believe that links are growing stronger between Europe and Asia in the field of higher education? In what ways? How could these ties be strengthened?

In general, if it comes to higher education the geographical conditions become rather conventional, especially in our region that has always been in the crossroads of Asia and Europe; and we are more apt to call our region Eurasia. Certainly links between the universities become stronger. As for the ways and forms of academic cooperations, the more variable they are the better.

7. How do you think higher education could better address the speed of cultural and societal changes in the 21st century?

Nowadays the higher education is permanently changing; becoming more available to a great number of people. It means that to have high education is not only an advantage, but also a necessity for people to find their proper place in the life. Such a serious approach of the society towards education will result in positive changes not only in social and public but also in political and economic systems.