

What research and training agenda will prepare the next generation for the future?

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今回の講演会では日本語は一切使用されず、講義は全て英語、質疑応答は一部を除きフランス語で行われた。そして前回の講演会に引き続き、通訳専攻の大学院生による同時通訳が実施された。講演ではまず国連大学の紹介ビデオを観た後、今回の題目である”What research and training agenda will prepare the next generation for the future?”について国連大学の役割や取り組みに触れながら講演が行われた。

Today I wish to share a few thoughts with you on how to better prepare the current and next generations of students for the future. I want to share a few thoughts on how to better prepare present and future students to become good citizens but also good professionals, whatever their country of belonging and field of work might be. Indeed, I thought that the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies would be a perfect place for me to share a few thoughts and have a conversation on the topic. For I guess one of the reasons why you, you as students, are enrolled in this university is that you are curious about the world beyond Japan, that you want to know more about the rest of the world –and of course learning foreign languages and cultures is a great way to do so -, but also that you want, in your future life and profession, to find ways to better connect Japan and the rest of the world. It happens that I believe this attitude, connecting any given country with the rest of the world, should be an essential part of academic training and will become more and more needed in the future. So, against this background, I would like to make three major points in my presentation, and I hope that afterwards we will have time to talk about them in our question and answer session.

First, I will highlight the main characteristics of current academic training and why they are becoming more and more inadequate in the context of the unfolding changes of the world in which we live. Second, I will mention what a better academic training would entail, especially in light of global changes and the intellectual and practical needs they bring about and skills they call for. Third, and finally, I will touch upon how our universities have to reform themselves, how they should upgrade their teaching and research activities and the training they offer to students.

I - Today's higher education

Let me begin with some personal considerations, as a way to introduce you to what I have come to think are the new needs in higher education today. As you may have seen from my biography, I am from France and I have been academically trained in Europe and in the United States. But beyond my initial academic training, life and my professional trajectory have led me to work in various parts of the world beyond the West, in Latin America and in Asia, and at the United Nations. And, in fact, over the course of my years abroad and at the United Nations, I have come to realize that my university training and probably most of the training that people of my generation and your generation receive, is largely inadequate if we are to prepare ourselves for addressing the problems of today's world, let alone those of tomorrow's world.

So, what have been the characteristics of my academic training, and of the ones of most people up to now, at least in the fields of the social sciences, humanities and law? Well, I would argue that this training is, among other things, built around four main characteristics. Needless to say, these four characteristics are not the only ones which count but these are the ones on which I want to focus today.

First, it is essentially a national, or nationalized, knowledge. Let me give you an example. When one studies history, philosophy or literature in a university in any country, unless one specializes in foreign cultures and languages, one studies first and foremost the history, the philosophical tradition and the literature of the country of where one is a citizen. Of course, there is nothing intrinsically wrong with this. Our first identity is the one of the country where we are born and where we grow up. But, in today's world, learning and knowing only our national world is not good enough.

A second aspect of what is being taught in universities today is the strong history orientation of knowledge. Here too, an example will help to understand what I mean. Look at the curricula of present universities in the fields of, say philosophy and sociology, just to name two disciplines. These curricula are principally a review of what past authors have said on the themes at the center of sociology and philosophy. In other words, the teaching of philosophy and sociology around the world is essentially the teaching of the history of philosophy and the history of sociology. And of course, once again, there is nothing wrong with learning about the past. As a matter of fact, learning about the past is a key aspect of understanding the present and preparing the future. This is why reading, and particularly reading the classics, is so important. On the other hand, when the past is the object of all attention, there is the danger that we do not do justice to reality that is we do not give ourselves the right intellectual tools to see and comprehend the specific challenges of the present and the future.

A third characteristic of university knowledge in the fields of the humanities and social sciences is its specialized nature. I realize that in this regard things have changed a bit in recent decades and that more students and professors are trying a pluri-disciplinary path. Myself I have to confess that as a young man I made a point of studying a variety of disciplines, mainly because I was curious and I felt that only one field would not do. But the fact of the matter is that today most students and most professors focus on only one field. This specialization is the product of professionalization. It is the product of the professionalization of the world of ideas, of the world of research and of teaching. For modern research

and modern teaching at the university level have developed hand in hand with this specialization. As a matter of fact, nowadays, the conception of science and teaching is such that students and professors alike are not even specializing in an academic field, but in a sub-field, or even a sub-field of a sub-field. The professionalization and specialization of the world of work has also led to the professionalization and specialization of students, such that now, many only focus on one field of study at university.

And then, there is the fourth characteristic of academic knowledge and teaching, that is essentially its Western dimension. In a way, it is not surprising that in the West the intellectual and cultural traditions that have been passed on to generations of students have been first and foremost Western. After all, in previous centuries, the West has been at the source and the core of the generation of knowledge, in hardcore sciences but also in social sciences. But, in response to the cultural and intellectual domination of the West in the last four or five centuries, non-Western worlds have somewhat surprisingly come to embrace Western knowledge. Once again, an example helps to make the point.

A few years ago, I was reading how the growing influence of the West in China, at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century, led to the Chinese to think that their own philosophical tradition was of little value, and perhaps was not a philosophy at all. As a result, thousands of years of Chinese philosophical knowledge came to be disqualified in the curriculum and replaced by so-called 'Western wisdom'. Some thing more or less similar happened in Japan in the 19th century, when it was forced to open and modernize. And a similar phenomenon happened in other parts of the world, in the Middle East in particular. Today, Western knowledge remains largely the benchmark.

II – Redesigning research and teaching for the future

So, this is where we are now. But this is not good enough. Indeed, I want now to argue that none of this is good enough anymore for the new world in which we live in, let alone in the world to come. Four trends of our contemporary world make these characteristics of mainstream academic knowledge particularly outdated, in fact an obstacle to understanding it well and acting on it. I mentioned earlier that most knowledge generated and passed on to students is today national in character. Well, while it is important to learn about one's own country, it is not sufficient, particularly in the world in which we live. National knowledge was perfectly fine when societies were essentially self-contained. But today this is not the

case. Today societies are increasingly interdependent, interconnected and internationalized. Their identities, their problems and the solutions to their problems are, much more than in the past, the product of interactions with other societies and cultures. That is to say that humanities and social sciences knowledge have to stop being produced at the national level for the national level. It is more the interactions among societies and the intertwining of societies and communities that have to be the focus of intellectual endeavours.

Second, for this reason, history can no longer be the main lens through which to analyze the world. The tools of the past are useful but they should not be treated as absolutes, or elevated to the exclusion of anything else; they should not become obstacles to seeing the current changes under way. In fact, as in all periods of deep and drastic change, and there have been plenty before, lessons of the past have to be treated rather than truths.

Third, in this regard the increasing need for interdisciplinarity serves as a case in point. As I indicated before, the establishment of the modern sciences, both as sciences and as institutions of knowledge, has taken place through specialization. This departed from the great humanist pre-modern tradition, in the context of which someone who dedicated his or her life to knowledge could be both a philosopher and a scientist, for instance. Well, somehow, the problems we are facing now and we are even more likely to face in the future call for us to go beyond specialization and mono-disciplinarity. Today, the problems of the environment for instance cannot be seen, addressed and solved within the limits of one academic field. In fact, because the problems we are facing today are global, holistic and transboundary, we have to mobilize a plurality of academic disciplines to understand them and address them.

Fourth, to better understand and address current and future problems, it is not only a plurality of academic disciplines that we have to mobilize. It is also a plurality of cultural traditions. When the West was dominating the world, it made sense that Western intellectual and cultural traditions served as terms of reference. The domination of the West and the need for non-Western nations to catch up with the West made it both a possibility and a necessity. This is not true anymore. First of all, the resentment towards the domination of the West and its values, far from diminishing, has grown, in the non-Western world. Moreover, the fact of the matter is that the West now dominates the world less and less, so the practice of making its intellectual and cultural traditions the main point of reference is becoming less and

less tenable, in fact more and more dangerous, for the West and the rest of the world. There is a need to introduce intellectual and cultural plurality in the ways in which students are being taught and prepared.

And from what I said so far, it is quite clear how research and teaching have to be redesigned to better prepare students of and for the future. In essence, research and teaching have to encompass the following characteristics. First, we have to denationalize knowledge, or internationalize it. Second, knowledge and education have to be more problem oriented. Third, pluridisciplinarity is a must. Fourth, we have to go beyond the West in terms of research and teaching programs. More specifically, what does this mean?

First, the internationalization of knowledge. When I talk about the internationalization of knowledge, I of course do not mean to say that we have to eliminate and disregard all together national bodies of knowledge. That would be stupid and counterproductive. What I mean is that we have to do the following.

First, we have to put national knowledge in a broader, international context. Here the key is to have students not thinking that national knowledge is the only one there is. Second, we have to focus on how national knowledge is produced beyond the national realm. As I said before, a country is the product of its interactions with the outside world. And as it is more and more the case, this has to be understood better and studied more.

Second, what about making knowledge and education more problem oriented? Here the key is to equip students with the right balance of historical knowledge and uninhibited imagination. To make my point, let me refer here to the fact that in academia all too often the focus is on debates and not on issues. And of course, debates are important. But more often than not too much importance is given to debating the strengths and weaknesses of the different schools of thought and intellectual paradigms around which academic knowledge comes to be organized. In the process, what is forgotten is that intellectual paradigms, theories if you will, are only tools and not ends in themselves. And that they have value only to the extent that they speak to the issues, that they help to clarify and understand the problems at hand. For, ultimately, the goal is to get a better understanding of the world, and not to demonstrate whether this theory or that theory is right.

Now, what about pluridisciplinarity? As I said earlier, in my view, this is an important component of the education of the future. And here I will add that ideally pluridisciplinarity should not take place within the framework of the humanities and social sciences, but as much as possible should be practiced across social sciences and more hardcore sciences. Indeed, nowadays more decision-makers, at all levels of responsibility, have to take decisions, in the private and public sectors, which require both knowledge, sensibility and awareness to social and scientific issues. Decisions taken about the fate of the environment are an example of this. So it is not enough to be trained as a scientist or an engineer. As much as possible, in the future, people in positions of responsibility will have to have two types of skills: skills allowing them to understand the science of public policy and skills allowing them to understand the social meanings and consequences of these policies.

Finally, there is the need to go beyond Western knowledge. This means bringing to the education table, so to speak, a variety of intellectual and cultural traditions. Students, and faculty, cannot afford to be trained only in one intellectual tradition, let alone in one cultural tradition. The fact that the world is becoming more interdependent and that the West is ceasing to be the only point of reference, calls for students having, in the West and in the non-West, a broader exposure to cultures. Of course, this entails learning foreign languages. And here let me say that as a foreign language English is a minimum but it is not enough. The international is not anymore simply the Anglo-American world. This also means that other foreign languages, such as Arabic, Chinese and others cannot be learned only by specialists of these regions. There are now a number of global regions and global cultures in the world, which call for their language to be learned by non-specialist of these regions.

III – The institutions of the education of the future, and conclusion

This leads me, and I am now approaching the end of my presentation, to say a few things about the education institutions of the future. In the process, I would like to finish with what we are currently trying to do at the United Nations University, the organization for which I currently work.

As you may know, the UNU is a think-tank for the UN and its member states. We are based in Tokyo, Japan and have 14 research and training centers around the world, in Asia, in the Middle East, Africa,

Europe and the Americas. In fact we are, with UNEP, the UN Environmental program, the only international organizations headquartered beyond the West, which is of course a very interesting fact.

So far we have been mainly a think-tank focusing on international security, international development and the environment. In these three areas we produce policy research or applied research, which we conduct in partnership with colleagues from academia, NGOs, and the public and private sectors at the national, regional and international levels. Our overarching theme is sustainability, that is, how to make the world more sustainable, from an economic, technological, ethical, social and political point of view. This is to say that while we are committed to knowledge and expertise, we are also committed to putting this knowledge and expertise to practical use, and to good practical use. In this regard, I should mention that in the Fall of 2009, the UN General Assembly endorsed an amendment of the UNU Charter so that UNU could become, in addition to being a think-tank, a degree granting organization. That is to say that starting soon UNU will be in a position to offer Master's and Ph.D degrees.

And, of course, in line with what I said today regarding the current limitations of higher education and what would be required to make it better, we are going to try to make UNU degrees able to offer what we think is needed to better train the next generation. It is going to take time, as we are still a small organization. It is not going to be easy, as it will take financial resources, the building of a curriculum and a faculty able to overcome the shortcomings which we see in current higher education. But we believe it is worth trying and that we are in a position to contribute in this area.

After all, one of the main priorities of universities around the world is to internationalize themselves, to build alliances with other countries. Well, UNU has this international identity in its DNA, so to speak, with 14 locations around the world and a very ethnically diverse group of researchers. Also, from the start UNU has been organized around problems rather than disciplines, which is another orientation that universities are now trying to cultivate and develop. So, this is where UNU is today. So far, we have been a think-tank for the UN and its member states. We will continue to be so and will continue to try to improve our work in this area. But we are now adding a new dimension, that of teaching and training the next generation, along the lines of which I believe are deeply needed for the future. I will stop here and I will be happy to take your questions.

質疑応答で所長は以下のように答えた。

1. 「アングロサクソンの考え方を超えて日本の哲学を進めるべきだ」
2. 「日本は経済力にくらべて政治力が世界に示されていない」
3. 「日本は調和の力でリードするのではなく、突出した力を示す時期である」
4. 「国連職員は専門へ特化するより、すべての専門的問題を理解して世界へ発信することが要求される」

本講演の” What research and training agenda will prepare the next generation for the future?”
の中で語られた現在の教育における問題点や理想的な教育のあり方などは、今まさに教育を受けている学生にとって身近に引き付けて考えることができる題目であった。さらに、理想的な教育のあり方として挙げられていた pluridisciplinarity や going beyond Western knowledge といった点は、多様なアプローチと多様な言語を学ぶことができる本学において、当てはまる人も多かったのではないだろうか。質疑応答からもこれからの大学生活における指針、および自信を得られたはずだ。質疑応答における積極的な姿勢と流暢にフランス語を用いて学生が質問する姿は語学を学ぶ全ての学生にとって大きな刺激になったに違いない。