

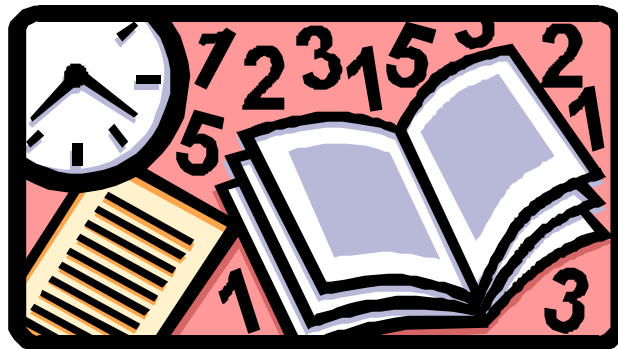
REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA

ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN WITH UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

MONITORING REPORT

ON

RIGHTS AND POSSIBILITIES OF STUDENTS TO
RECEIVE QUALITY EDUCATION IN PEDAGOGICAL
HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS OF ARMENIA



YEREVAN, 2001

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|--|-----------|
| <u>REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA: BACKGROUND INFORMATION</u> | 3 |
| <u>INTRODUCTION</u> | 4 |
| <u>LAWS AND SUB-LEGISLATIVE ACTS OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA REGULATING THE EDUCATION SYSTEM</u> | 5 |
| <u>CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA</u> | 5 |
| <u>THE LAW ON EDUCATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA</u> | 6 |
| <u>CHARTER OF THE ARMENIAN STATE PEDAGOGICAL UNIVERSITY NAMED AFTER KH. ABOVYAN</u> | 7 |
| <u>INDIVIDUAL CONTRACT BETWEEN THE UNIVERSITY AND STUDENTS PAYING FOR EDUCATION</u> | 10 |
| <u>NATIONAL PROGRAM FOR EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT IN 2001-2005</u> | 11 |
| <u>OBJECTIVE OF THE MONITORING</u> | 12 |
| <u>SURVEYED RIGHTS OF STUDENTS</u> | 14 |
| <u>THE RIGHT TO OBTAIN PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION</u> | 14 |
| <u>THE RIGHT TO OBTAIN INFORMATION</u> | 17 |
| <u>THE RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE IN SELF-GOVERNANCE OF A HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION</u> | 22 |
| <u>THE RIGHT TO FREELY EXPRESS ONE’S IDEAS AND BELIEFS</u> | 23 |
| <u>PROCEDURAL RIGHTS</u> | 24 |
| <u>CONCLUSIONS</u> | 25 |
| <u>RECOMMENDATIONS</u> | 27 |
| <u>TO THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA</u> | 27 |
| <u>TO THE RECTORS OF PEDAGOGICAL HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS</u> | 27 |
| <u>TO STUDENT COUNCILS AND OTHER ASSOCIATIONS IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS</u> | 28 |

Republic of Armenia: Background Information

Republic of Armenia: a country in the South Caucasus.

Capital: Yerevan.

Population: 3 (three) million.

Territory: 29,800 sq. km.

Administrative partition of territory: 11 marzes (provinces), including the City of Yerevan as a separate province.

The population comprises not only Armenians, but also Ezdis, Kurds, Russians, Ukrainians, Greeks, Assyrians, Jews, and Georgians.

In 1991, a nationwide referendum took place to declare Armenia's independence and withdrawal from the USSR.

95% of the population are literate.

Introduction

Being ahead of economic development in terms of training qualified professionals, the higher education system performs a unique social function of providing the future generation with institutional values such as civic stance and social activity.

Social and political transition of the Armenian society has raised the necessity of reforming the higher education system. Nevertheless, restructuring of the higher education system of the Republic of Armenia (hereinafter, the RoA) has been slow; old stereotypes have persisted, which do not meet the current needs.

In a period of social transformation, when shifting from a totalitarian regime to a democratic society, the need for teachers who will bring up and shape the future citizens of the country through the general system of secondary education has materialized stronger than ever. Indeed, not only the level of professional knowledge and legal awareness of teachers, but also their active civic stance shall greatly determine the role of schools and their capacity in upbringing and shaping active and full-fledge members of society, who ought to be aware of and standing up for their rights.

In the frameworks of the “Monitoring on Rights and Possibilities of Students to Receive Quality Education in Pedagogical Higher Education Institutions of Armenia”, with the support of ODIHR/OSCE and the Polish Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights (Warsaw), the Association of Women with University Education has carried out studies to explore the legal awareness of students of pedagogical higher education institutions of the RoA and the extent to which they focus on the implementation of their civil rights.

Project implementation activities comprised:

- An analysis of laws and sub-legislative acts: the Convention on the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Constitution of the RoA, the RoA “Law on Education”, the National Program for Education Development in 2001-2005, and charters of higher education institutions;
- Development of sociological questionnaires, execution of pilot surveys, and refinement of samples;
 - Execution of the survey;
 - Processing and analysis of survey data;
 - Individual and group interviews with students;
 - Interviews with lecturers in higher education institutions;
 - Producing monitoring results; and
 - Elaboration of recommendations.

Laws and Sub-Legislative Acts of the Republic of Armenia Regulating the Education System

Activities of state pedagogical higher education institutions are regulated by the Constitution of the RoA, the RoA “Law on Education”, and the Charter of the institution

Constitution of the Republic of Armenia

Article 23:

Every person has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion.

Article 24:

Every person has the right to assert one’s opinion.

Every person has the freedom of expression, including the freedom to seek, acquire, and disseminate information and ideas through any information means...

Article 25:

Every person has the right to create unions with other persons...

Article 35:

Every citizen has the right to education.

Secondary education in state higher education institutions is free-of-charge

Every citizen has the right to obtain free higher or other special education in state higher education institutions on a competitive basis.

The Law on Education of the Republic of Armenia

Notwithstanding that Armenia declared its independence in 1991, a “Law on Education” was adopted by the National Assembly of the RoA only on April 14 of 1999, which delayed the process of both updating the education system as a whole and reaching its main target of playing a leading role in relation to economic development. Nevertheless, the Law has facilitated to a certain extent the progress of reforms in the education system.

The reform process embodies not only the contents of higher and post-diploma education, but also its structure and administration:

- Humanization of education is carried out in several directions: universalization of education, teaching new professions (theology, art history, social work, political science, and others), and broadening the basic humanities training (law, economics, and other optional or mandatory courses of humanities).

- Self-governance of higher education institutions has been expanded in terms of administration, financing, and introducing new curricula.

- The role of lecturers and students in university administration has increased.

- Standards of admission for state-funded education have been developed.

- The Government of the RoA has approved and introduced a regulation on licensing and registering private universities.

However, the National Program for Education Development in 2001-2005 sets forth that when the Education Law was adopted, a number of important laws and sub-legislative acts were already in place in the RoA (including the “Law on Public Administration and Local Self-Government”, and a number of other laws on social, economic, financial, and fiscal policy, as well as the Civil Code of the RoA), which meant that certain provisions of the Education Law were adapted to the already existing ones, and that this explains why the Education Law has certain shortcomings.

The lack of adequate financial support for the implementation of the Education Law and the low salaries of lecturers create an environment conducive to bribery, ultimately impeding a proper implementation of the education policy.

The centralized system of admission exams has concentrated the tools for managing this process in the hands of specific small groups holding the exams; effectively, such a system has only enlarged the bribe sums.

In 2001, just two years after the Education Law was adopted, the process of accreditation and licensing of private universities began, which in turn set a favorable environment for a new “wave” of bribery and corruption in the system.

Charter of the Armenian State Pedagogical University Named after Kh. Abovyan

Since the Charters of the three pedagogical higher education institutions are practically identical and contain no fundamental discrepancies, the Report will focus on analyzing the Charter of the Armenian State Pedagogical University.

The Charter of the University comprises:

- 1. General Provisions.**
- 2. Objectives and Rights of the University.**
- 3. Administration of the University.**

Administrative Bodies

University Council, Scientific Council, Rectorate, and Rector of the University.

The supreme administration body is the University (Institute) Council, which is elected for a 5-year term. ***The Council adopts the Charter and makes amendments and modifications to it. The Charter is approved by the Ministry.*** The Council reviews and submits to the Ministry's approval the annual budget and determines a procedure for using off-budgetary resources. The Council cannot have more than 140 members. The Council comprises: the Rector, the Deputy Rectors, the Scientific Secretary, the Directors of Branches, Deans of Departments, Chairs, the Director of the Library, the Chief Accountant, representatives of the Student Trade Union and the University Staff Trade Union, the Chairmen of the Student Council and the Student Scientific Society, as well as heads of other structural units, as recommended by the Rector. The remaining members of the Council are elected according to a regulation approved by the Presidency. The election procedure is as follows: ***over 60% of the elected Council members must be lecturers and research staff***, 15% are administrative staff, ***and up to 25% are students*** (the authors of this Report note there is not a minimum on student representation in the Council, which means it is quite possible that students not be represented in the Council at all). The Chairman of the Council is the Rector. The University Council meets once every six months.

The Scientific Council is a body chaired by the Rector of the University. The Scientific Council resolves issues pertaining to the academic, methodological, and scientific aspects of university activities. The Council is elected for a term of five years; it meets once a month, and has an internal regulation. On the basis of suggestions by the Rector, the Scientific Council approves the main directions of University development, including the main areas of cooperation with other academic, cultural, and scientific institutions both with the RoA and abroad. The Scientific Council drafts the procedures of applicant admission and proposes to the Ministry the number of paying students in various departments, whose tuition will not be covered by the state. The Scientific Council votes with secret ballot to elect the chairs and faculty (professors and instructors), to decide on granting Ph.D., professorship, nominal scholarships, medals,

and honor certificates, as well as to propose candidates for awards (national and international). The Scientific Council may not have more than 55 members. The Scientific Council comprises: up to 50% of the Council are officials (including the Chairman of the Student Council), up to 15% of this first half are recommended by the Rector; and the remaining 50% of the members are elected (including, up to 25% students).

The Rectorate is a consultative body to the Rector. The Rectorate organizes, supervises, and carries out decrees, decisions of the University and Scientific Councils in the time between meetings of the Councils. The Rectorate comprises: the Rector, the Deputy Rectors, the Scientific Secretary, the heads of branches, research and development (R & D) institutions and centers, deans of departments, and heads of academic sections. The Presidency calls meetings of the University and Scientific Councils and the Presidency, and ensures their close cooperation.

4. Structure of the University

The basic subdivisions are: academic units (departments, chairs, colleges, schools, etc.), R & D, science and application, reforms, and administration.

The management of all the subdivisions and their branches, colleges, schools, pre-school institutions, and other structural subdivisions, as well as their collaboration with the University are regulated by this Charter, their Charters, and bilateral agreements. The academic activities of the University are handled by the academic unit.

Scientific activities and training of science fellows shall be handled by the scientific unit, which comprises the R & D unit and the post-graduate school.

The University has a separate unit engaged in the process of carrying out reforms.

Each department is headed by a Dean, which is elected in accordance with a regulation approved by the Ministry of Education of the RoA, for a period of up to five years. On the basis of the elections, the Rector issues a formal decree concerning the appointment of a Dean on contractual grounds.

In the Scientific Council, a Dean submits to the Rector's approval curricula and academic programs; a Dean also resolves issues related to the academic, methodological, and scientific and research activities of the respective Department.

According to a prescribed procedure, a Dean makes recommendations to the Rector concerning the appointment and dismissal of Deputy Deans, the transfer or non-transfer of students to a subsequent year of studies, the expulsion or re-admittance of students, leave permissions for the staff, etc.

The Department Council is an entity headed by the Dean, which is authorized to pass compulsory decisions concerning students and staff. According to an established procedure, the Department Council is appointed by the Scientific Council. The Department Council stays in office for the same period as the Dean does (up to five years). The Department Council proposes to the Rector a candidate for the post of Dean, or proposes to terminate the office of a Dean pre-term. According to a regulation approved by the Ministry of Education of the RoA, the Council takes secret votes to elect a Department Dean, docents, assistants, and lecturers on a competitive basis. The

Council presents the results of its votes to the Rector for the latter to issue a formal decree on appointment of the aforementioned staff on contractual basis.

5. Academic and Scientific Activities

Teaching is conducted by regular classes, distance learning, and by expedited courses. The academic year is divided into two halves, each of which ends with a session of exams.

Academic and scientific activities of the University may involve lecturers, scientific staff, post-graduate students, research staff, as well as students and invited contractor-specialists.

6. Staff and Students of the University

The rights and responsibilities of University staff are defined by a regulation approved by the Scientific Council in accordance with the legislation of the RoA.

Students include regular students, post-graduate students, research staff, and research fellows.

Students have the right:

- To use specialized laboratories, auditoriums, the library, as well as athletic, health, and cultural establishments and other services of the University.
- To combine education for a major profession with education for a minor/second specialty, and to receive two qualifications.
- *To propose representatives to the elected bodies of the University.*
- According to an established procedure, to combine education with employment in structural subdivisions of the University.

Responsibilities of Students:

- Follow the internal discipline rules and handle and use University property, the library resources, and laboratory equipment with care;
- Attend classes, as a mandatory requirement.
- Perform all the assignments in a timely manner and take tests and exams.

The Student Council is a body of student self-governance and a representation of their collective interests; the Student Council proposes student representatives to the elected bodies of the University, and recommends to the relevant administrative bodies of the University to review issues regarding students. *The creation and operation procedure of the Student Council is defined by its Regulation, which is approved by the Scientific Council of the University upon presentation by the Rector.*

Individual Contract between the University and Students Paying for Education

The section concerning the responsibilities of the University contains three paragraphs [quoted below]:

- *Following the payment of the tuition, the University shall issue a decree on the admission of an applicant who has passed the competition after taking admission exams, or a student who passed the difference in exams.*
- *For students who have paid the annual tuition, the University shall create conditions necessary for them to continue studies.*
- *For citizens completing the theory courses stipulated by the curriculum and passing the graduation exams, the University shall grant them an appropriate qualification.*

The responsibilities of students include the following:

- *Payment for every year of studies; the payment for the first year of studies shall be made before the admission decree is issued, and in the following years, the payment shall be made within 20 days after the beginning of a semester.*
- *Indexed tuition if the minimum wage level changes.*

In addition to these provisions, the Contract contains a section on the tuition volume and the dates and procedure of its payment.

The Contract regulates in detail the conditions of student tuition payment, but contains no specific responsibilities for the University in terms of securing a quality education process. The Contract contains many general and ambiguous provisions. In particular, the Contract does not clarify what are “*conditions necessary to continue studies*”.

National Program for Education Development in 2001-2005

The Program points out that the proper implementation of an education policy is hindered by the absence or imperfection of enforcement mechanisms, the untimely adoption of sub-legislative acts, as well as the contradictions in the existing legal framework. The existing legislation of the RoA does not declare or guarantee a progressive development of the education sector as a crucial factor for strengthening statehood (Education Law, Article 4, para. 1).

The absence of law enforcement mechanisms and the quality of implementation of legal acts, as well as the lack of effective controls over protection of rights of stakeholders in the education process render specific difficulties. Thus, expansion, refinement, and better enforcement of laws has become a problem that needs to be solved urgently.

Thus, the system faces a problem in terms of collecting, analyzing, and assessing credible information, which could be a sound basis for decision-making and efficient administration.

Objective of the Monitoring

Concepts like “democracy”, “civil society”, “civil activity”, and “human rights” have strongly penetrated into the day-to-day life of the country

What meaning do these concepts have for each individual, especially a young one: does a young person perceive these notions as beliefs? What does he/she know about his/her rights and the ways of protecting them?

The objective of this monitoring was to study the actual state of affairs in terms of implementing the principles of democratic governance in pedagogical higher education institutions of the country. To what extent are the future teachers informed and aware of their civil rights and the ways of realizing such rights? What opportunities do they have to use their own practical experience to gain skills necessary for the protection of their own rights? To what extent is university education conducive of the youth acquiring a new democratic culture?

Surveys were carried out in all three of the public pedagogical higher education institutions of the country: the Armenian State Pedagogical University named after Kh. Abovyan, the Gyumri State Pedagogical Institute named after M. Nalbandyan, and the Vanadzor State Pedagogical Institute.

300 students of graduating classes (fourth and fifth years) in different departments were interviewed (100 in each of the aforementioned higher education institutions).

Target groups:

- **Armenian State Pedagogical University**

26 graduating students of each of the history-geography and chemistry-biology departments, 30 students of the department of elementary education and defectology, and 18 students of the pedagogy and psychology department.

- **Gyumri State Pedagogical Institute**

9 graduating students each of the pedagogical and physics-mathematics departments, 29 students of the history-philology department, 38 students of the foreign languages department, 12 students of the initial military training department, and 3 students of the natural sciences department.

- **Vanadzor State Pedagogical Institute**

21 graduating students each of the history-geography and physics-mathematics departments, 24 students of the philology department, 12 students of the pedagogy and elementary education department, and 22 students of the chemistry-biology department.

Graduating students were chosen because of the following considerations:

1. A graduating student is effectively a ready specialist (a teacher);
2. A graduating student has got experience of participation (or non-participation) in governance of the higher education institution.
3. Graduating students know about student unions of their respective higher education institution better than others do.
4. During the 4-5 years of studies, having had a maximum number of disciplines and, respectively, knowing a larger number of lecturers, various methods of teaching and knowledge assessment, the graduating students are better informed about the possibility of freely expressing one's ideas and beliefs.
5. Graduating students know more about their rights and the procedures of their protection, based on specific experiences.
6. As for the gender composition of the target groups, the number of male students in pedagogical higher education institutions is not high, and in some departments, there are no male students at all (which leads to a gender imbalance and a feminization of general secondary schools, where 85% of the teachers are women); however, in departments where there were some male students, as many of them as possible were interviewed. The survey showed that in Yerevan, 23% of the respondents were male, 39% in Gyumri, and 28% in Vanadzor.

Surveyed Rights of Students

- The right to receive professional education.
- The right to obtain information.
- The right to participate in self-governance of the higher education institution.
- The right to freely express one's ideas and beliefs.
- Procedural rights.

The Right to Receive Professional Education

According to the Constitution of the RoA (Article 35, para. 3), each citizen has the right to obtain professional education.

However, in order to integrate into the international education community and to become competitive in the existing labor markets both domestically and abroad, it is necessary to obtain **high quality** professional education.

The following preconditions and implementation techniques are necessary to provide good quality education:

1. A unified system of national standards on the quality of education.

We managed to find out that in Armenia, a unified system of national standards on the quality of education in higher education institutions has not been introduced yet.

2. Highly professional faculty (professors and lecturers) meeting the current needs.

The quality of education of future teachers will first of all depend on the professionalism of university lecturers. However, there are still obvious problems with human resources in the system of pedagogical education, which are caused by:

- *An outflow of qualified lecturers because of the low salaries and the weak social protection and their replacement with non-professionals (Quoting a student interview: "An immense need for bright lecturers with a high level of intellect. Basically, just like in any other sector.")*
- *The absence of an attesting and licensing mechanism for lecturers.*
- *In higher education, the average age of lecturers is 56-58, and for certain professions, it exceeds 60 (Quoting a student interview: "The lectures are often uninteresting. Not up-to-date. We also need young staff and innovative approaches, in order to have a balance between experience and innovation.")*

3. Appropriate curricula and teaching programs.

The process of developing new curricula and teaching programs in higher education institutions has been extremely slow.

4. Introduction of innovative information and education technology into the system of education.

The introduction of up-to-date information and education technology into the education system of the country has been slow. Not only students, but also many lecturers lack sufficient knowledge on existing modern information technology, which is a crucial precondition for integration with the international education community, and a fundamental need in the 21-st century. (Quoting a student interview: “Computers are not very accessible. We get computer access only during the computer classes, even though it is required to submit term papers and diploma work in electronic format. I would like to get Internet, too.”)

5. A regularly updated stock of library resources in terms of professional literature.

During our survey in the three higher education institutions, both students and lecturers often noted the lack or the full absence of up-to-date professional literature in the libraries of their institutions, especially in Armenian (Quoting a student interview: “There is much literature in the library, but it is out of date. They do not let you borrow books from the library, and studying in the library hall is not very convenient, not to mention the poor services there.”)

“We are not satisfied with the work of the library. There is no inter-library sharing. We understand much has to do with funding, but they do not let you borrow even the books listed in the catalogue. The library stock should be accessible for the students.”)

Following the 1988 earthquake, the Gyumri Pedagogical Institute was in temporary wooden dwellings (“domiks”), and six years ago, the Institute moved into a new building that was not originally planned for a higher education institution.

The Institute library does not have a reading hall. The library stock has not yet been completely restored, and as a consequence, it is difficult for a broad range of students and lecturers to access the stock of the library.

During interviews with lecturers of all three of the aforementioned institutions, we found out that they have to put aside a part of their scanty salary to purchase literature in Russian and to translate it for the students. In other instances, the lecturers manage to publish their work, which then gets sold to the students.

6. Premises and Equipment.

The equipment in the pedagogical higher education institutions has become out of date. There is no furniture, and the premises are not in good shape. The equipment in the laboratories has got a long way to improve. There are no didactic materials (Quoting a student interview: “The lessons are often uninteresting, but it is not always

the teachers' fault. There is neither any equipment, nor other conditions. There are no study rooms.")

7. Optimal combination of theory with practical sessions.

Students obtain school teaching techniques only during the last year of studies; this often creates a gap between theory and practice (Quoting a student interview: "Internship is only for the graduating year. Practice does not catch up with changing textbooks and techniques. We would rather have more practice in various schools.")

To summarize all of this, one has to note that the pedagogical higher education institutions of the country do not fulfil the students' right to obtaining high quality professional education.

The Right to Obtain Information

Article 10 of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and Article 24 of the Constitution of the RoA lay down the right of every person to freely seek, obtain, and impart information.

Notwithstanding declarations of commitment to democratic values, the practice in the country as a whole, and in the higher education institutions, in particular, shows that nothing is being done to familiarize students with their own rights. This legal unawareness not only limits the opportunity of students to protect their rights, but also acts as a major impediment on the way towards a lawful civil society.

The rights of a student would mean that he/she may participate in decision-making regarding his/her interests. However, any participation is, first and far most important, awareness. Awareness is defined as the amount of information a student possesses.

This means that students may learn about their rights by means of a broad access to information on legal instruments (and particularly, the Charter of a higher education institution), which regulate the activities of the institution in question and lay down the rights and responsibilities of stakeholders in the academic process.

The survey disclosed that only six of the 300 respondents are familiar with the Charter of their respective institution, 243 have no idea whatsoever, and 51 are somewhat familiar. A relatively large proportion of students are familiar with the Charter in the Armenian Pedagogical University (*see Table 1*).

Table 1.
Are you familiar with the Charter of your higher education institution?

| Name of institution | Yes | Partially | No |
|---------------------------------------|-----|-----------|-----|
| Armenian State Pedagogical University | 3% | 24% | 73% |
| Gyumri State Pedagogical Institute | - | 14% | 86% |
| Vanadzor State Pedagogical Institute | 3% | 13% | 81% |
| All three together | 2% | 17% | 81% |

Even those who claimed they are familiar with the Charter could not make a correct reference to even one provision in the Charter.

Moreover, the vast majority of the students for the first time heard about the existence of a Charter during our survey. Besides, 40% of all respondents (and in Yerevan, even 56%) believe any one who wishes may familiarize oneself with the Charter. By saying this, students mean that if they had known about the existence of a Charter earlier, then they would be most likely to familiarize themselves with it.

During the survey, it was discovered that in all three of the institutions, not only the students, but also the majority of teachers are not at all familiar with the Charter. During interviews with lecturers, in response to the question “is the Charter commonly

accessible?”, we heard answers like “What Charter? Who is it for?” or “What Charter? You need to talk to the Rector? Perhaps, basically, it is commonly accessible”.

Meanwhile, one should note that teachers’ unawareness of the Charter is at times not because it is difficult to access the Charter, but rather, because the relationship within faculty members has not democratized, the participation of lecturers in the institutional governance has not become more active, and their responsibility for the overall status of the education process has not strengthened; commanded and administrative methods continue to prevail. There is a reason why many lecturers knew about how the Charter is adopted, but did not have knowledge of its contents.

Another objective of the survey was to discover student awareness of:

1. their rights;
2. violations of their rights in the higher education institutions; and
3. the accessibility of information on financial activities of the institutions and the minimum and maximum requirements in exams.

Student Awareness of Their Rights

Only 4% of the 300 respondents believe they are very well aware of their rights; 3% of those are from the Armenian Pedagogical University, while none of the 4% respondents are from the Gyumri Pedagogical Institute. The number of students who are aware of their rights as students is comparatively high in the Vanadzor Pedagogical Institute. About half of the respondents have partial knowledge of their rights. As for complete negligence of rights, the situation is worst in Gyumri. (*See Table 2*)

Table 2.

Please, tell us whether you know the rights you have as a student of this higher education institution.

| Name of institution | Yes, I know very well | Yes, I know partially | No, I do not know |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Armenian State Pedagogical University | 3% | 58% | 39% |
| Gyumri State Pedagogical Institute | - | 46% | 54% |
| Vanadzor State Pedagogical Institute | 9% | 46% | 45% |
| All three together | 4% | 50% | 46% |

Main sources of student awareness on their rights

As the main sources of information on students’ own rights, students mention, in priority order, the lecturers, friends, and parents. It is noteworthy that university administration is not mentioned by any of the respondents as a source of awareness on students’ own rights. The responses in the different institutions vary. While in Vanadzor and Yerevan, the majority of the respondents mentioned lecturers as the main source of

information supporting awareness, most of the students in Gyumri become aware of their rights with information received from their parents.

The Student Council as a source of information was mentioned only by 7% of the respondents. Once again, the ration in Yerevan was 18%, that in Gyumri was 11%, and in Vanadzor, no one mentioned the Student Council as a source of information. (See Table 3)

Table 3.
Please, mention the sources of awareness on your rights?

| Name of institution | Main source of information on awareness | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|-----------------|-----------|
| | Parents | Student Council | Lecturers |
| Armenian State Pedagogical University | 9% | 18% | 19% |
| Gyumri State Pedagogical Institute | 21% | 3% | 11% |
| Vanadzor State Pedagogical Institute | 6% | - | 36% |
| All three together | 12% | 7% | 22% |

Student awareness of violation of student rights in their respective higher education institution

The vast majority (68%) of the respondents believe that in their higher education institution, rights of students are fully or partially violated; respondents from the Vanadzor Pedagogical Institute most commonly express this view. Only 6% of the respondents believe the rights of the students are not violated. (See Table 4)

Table 4.
Do you think student rights are violated in your higher education institution?

| Name of institution | Yes | Partially | No | Difficulty answering |
|---------------------------------------|-----|-----------|-----|----------------------|
| Armenian State Pedagogical University | 21% | 29% | 11% | 39% |
| Gyumri State Pedagogical Institute | 44% | 22% | 3% | 31% |
| Vanadzor State Pedagogical Institute | 61% | 27% | 3% | 9% |
| All three together | 42% | 26% | 6% | 26% |

The respondent breakdown by gender is as follows: 73% of the young ladies and 59% of the young men believe that in their institution, rights of students are violated. The percentage of female respondents in this field is higher because they believe they are more vulnerable because of their gender, as they quite often face sexual harassment by male lecturers.

As for what rights are most frequently violated, the students mentioned the biased knowledge assessment during exams.

In addition to violation of rights, the majority of students (65%) believe that in their institution, the dignity of students is quite often humiliated by lecturers and

administrators. These complaints were most harsh in Vanadzor (82%). (To compare, it was 66% in Gyumri and 50% in Yerevan.)

An analysis of student humiliation cases shows they have the following features:

1. In Yerevan and Gyumri, the most frequently used type of insult is a verbal one, while the students in Vanadzor mentioned disregard for students.
2. The second most frequently used type of insult for Yerevan students is insults by action; for Gyumri students, disregard for the students' opinion, and for Vanadzor students, verbal insults.

One should note that students often do not react to insults by the lecturers, fearing that the latter might retaliate either during the exams or by means of depriving a student of the student allowance.

To discover student awareness on the activities of their institution, the following question was addressed: *Can you freely obtain information in your institution?*

1. Concerning the financial activities of the institution.

66% of the respondents noted they cannot freely obtain information on item by item budgetary expenditures for a current year.

2. Concerning the procedure of procuring necessary equipment, furniture, and services.

60% of the students mentioned the inaccessibility of such information.

3. Concerning minutes of Presidency meetings and the decisions adopted in such meetings.

In Yerevan and Vanadzor, the situation in this respect is better than that in Gyumri. 57% of the students in Gyumri believe this type of information is inaccessible, while the figure is 23% in Yerevan and 39% in Vanadzor.

4. Concerning minimum and maximum exam requirements in relation to students.

Students consider this type of information most accessible (55% of the respondents). In Gyumri, though, only 38% of the respondents believe this information is accessible. Nevertheless, this is the information that has direct relevance for the students.

60% of all respondents believe not all of the information concerning students (exam dates, allowances, deadlines for tuition payment, and deductions from the allowances) get to them in time.

Questions regarding accessibility of information on the financial activities of the higher education institutions were also posed to the lecturers. The spectrum of responses is broad, all the way from “I am not interested,” “never know, never think about it, even though our passiveness is the wrong way to live”, “difficulty answering, all we see is civil works, the rest is not seen, and we do not know”, to “yes, we can find about from the Chief Accountant. The draft of the budget is discussed in the departments, as well. The Deans tell the teachers they may study it and propose changes.” However, even those lecturers who knew of the financial activities of their institution did not consider it necessary to inform the students.

The procedure of procuring necessary equipment is unknown even for those teachers who know of the financial expenditure; they can merely guess that “the Rector has the right to determine himself.”

The lecturers also mentioned that at times, they get information from the Dean’s office in non-official ways.

Thus, neither the students nor the teachers have access to this aspect of higher education institution governance.

The Right to Participate in Self-Governance of a Higher Education Institution

As it is pointed out in the National Program for Education Development self-governance is underdeveloped in higher education institutions. Democratization of the education system is slow. Effective tools and conditions for efficient administration and self-governance have not been developed yet.

The survey comes to prove this point.

In Yerevan and Vanadzor, practically all the respondents know of the existence of the Student Council, as an intermediary body for the rights of students in governance of their institution. The situation in Gyumri is different: every second respondent has not even heard of such a union before.

In Yerevan and Vanadzor, a bit more than half of the respondents know about the functions of the Student Council. Both the students and the lecturers believe the main functions of the Student Council are to organize cultural events such as concerts, festivals, show-games, site tours, and athletic tournaments. Only 13% see the Student Council as an entity to protect the rights and interests of students.

Interviews with students disclosed that the Student Council has become some type of a fringe for the Presidency, growing further apart from solving actual problems of students. We also found out that the Student Council elections are carried out violating principles of democracy, and at times, such elections are substituted with an appointment by the administrators. Thus, the efficiency of cooperation between the Student Council and the administrators in terms of protecting interests of students depends, first of all, on the willingness of the Rector. As a result of this, the Student Council does not perform its main function of securing student self-governance (“The Student Council does not quite understand it has got a role to play”). Moreover, during office elections, the votes of the Student Council members are not rarely manipulated.

Currently, the students effectively do not participate in the adoption of decisions concerning the students; furthermore, they do not participate in institutional governance. The evidence to this end is that 82% of the respondents noted that neither they nor their friends have either participated or participate in the process of decision-making. Of the 15% that claimed they participate in this process, only 4% could describe how they do so (mostly, via the Student Council).

Thus, the process of shaping a democratic system of institutional governance has been slow; students have not been included in self-governance, and their roles and functions have not gained in relevance.

The Right to Freely Express One's Ideas and Beliefs

Article 10 of the Convention on Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and Article 24 of the Constitution of the RoA lay down the right of every person to freely express one's opinion.

When we asked the respondents whether they can freely express their opinion if they disagree with that of the teacher, about half of the respondents (55%) mentioned it would depend on the situation and the teacher. The teachers reiterated this point. Meanwhile, students "would like to see more equality in the professional relationship between lecturers and students. A free exchange of opinions; a willingness to debate, discuss; an ability to listen to another opinion. Many of the lecturers act like school teachers. Dictate the lecture and require that the lecture be written down."

The survey also disclosed that Vanadzor is better off in terms of freedom of expression.

Only 4% of the respondents mentioned that they can never freely express their opinion or belief.

Interestingly enough, it turned out that students from villages are most free in expressing their opinions.

Procedural rights

The vast majority of the respondents are not familiar with the procedure of protecting their rights; most of such cases were found in Vanadzor. (See Table 5)

Table 5.
Are you familiar with how to file complaints (where and to whom) if your rights are violated?

| Name of institution | Yes | No |
|---------------------------------------|-----|-----|
| Armenian State Pedagogical University | 46% | 54% |
| Gyumri State Pedagogical Institute | 33% | 66% |
| Vanadzor State Pedagogical Institute | 24% | 76% |
| All three together | 35% | 65% |

A gender analysis showed that notwithstanding the fact that the rights of female students are more frequently violated, they are less informed about where and to whom to complain than the male students are.

Notwithstanding that one third of the respondents said they know where and to whom to complain if their rights are violated, only 20% were able to describe *the procedure of filing complaints*.

The survey showed that in order to protect their rights, students most often go to the Dean's office or to the Presidency. The efficiency of such a procedure of complaints got the highest grade in Gyumri, and the lowest in Vanadzor.

No one mentioned cases when students would have gone to student self-governance bodies. Meanwhile, 67% of the respondents expressed doubt concerning the efficiency of going to the Dean's office or to the Presidency.

Students mention that when their rights are violated, they are normally the ones to take action to restore their rights, and that they less often go to friends for help.

The vast majority (76%) of the respondents had difficulty answering whether their institution has got a procedure of filing complaints in case of a teacher/student conflict. Only 5% knew about the availability of such a remedy, but in any event, they prefer to work out the problems on their own, since the efficiency of the conflict resolution schemes often depends on the status of the parties to the conflict and the "friends" each of the parties has. The lecturers confirmed this point.

Quoted from an interview with a lecturer:

"I do not know the procedure stipulated by law, but the institution does not have specific procedures for conflict resolution."

"There is no procedure; the students are afraid to say anything because of the exams."

Conclusions

Thus, to sum up the results of the monitoring, one could draw the following conclusions:

1. The process of introducing new programs and teaching techniques into the higher education institutions of the country, based on the principle of building democratic values, democratic culture, and civil activity among the growing generation, has been extremely slow.
2. Under the respective disciplines, the level of legal awareness transmitted to the students is low.
3. The introduction of up-to-date information and education technology into the Pedagogical education system of the country has been slow.
4. The assets and other equipment of the pedagogical higher education institutions has become antiquated and worn out. The auditoriums are in a poor condition. The equipment in the laboratory and the libraries has got much to improve. There are no didactic materials.
5. The libraries of the pedagogical higher education institutions virtually completely lack modern professional and legal literature.
6. A gap is noticed between theoretic knowledge and relevant practical skills.
7. There is no scheme for increasing legal awareness during non-class time.
8. The activities of institutional governance bodies (University/Institute Council, Scientific Council, Presidency, Deans, and the like) lack transparency.
9. Teacher involvement in university administration has not become more active, and teacher responsibility for the overall process of education has not strengthened; the pace of overcoming conventional approaches in university management is slow, and commanded and administrative methods remain prevalent.
10. The activities of the Student Council do not secure the fulfillment of the functions assigned to the Council. Student self-governance is not effectively implemented in universities; student roles and functions are not carried out.
11. An impartial scheme of knowledge assessment criteria during exams is not available; there are not clear minimum and maximum examination requirements posed to the students, which creates a conducive framework for potential violation of student rights by the teachers. At times, students do not express their

opinion or do not react to the humiliation of their dignity by the teacher because of the fear of retaliation during exams.

12. Pedagogical higher education institutions lack an established procedure of complaints in cases of teacher-student conflicts.

The analysis of data acquired during the monitoring disclosed the following:

- On the one hand, there is a clear trend towards a desire to change the situation, and on the other, there is a lack of confidence in the possibility of change and in the ways of bringing about such change;
- On the one hand, there is awareness of one's own rights, and on the other, there is fear that every initiative or action to defend one's rights will cause the "boomerang effect" and hurt the person taking such initiative or action; and
- On the one hand, there are new needs and demands, and on the other, there is a fear of innovation.

Recommendations

To the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Armenia

1. The system of training of lecturers and professors should contemplate special courses on issues of civil society development, democratization of the education system, and awareness on human rights.
2. It is necessary to develop and introduce a unified system of national standards for all the levels of higher education. When developing new curricula and teaching programs for the higher education institutions, it will be necessary to focus more on topics related to building democratic culture and civil self-awareness among students, as well as to increasing the level of general legal awareness.
3. It is necessary to reconsider the teaching of a “Law” course in the early years of higher education.
4. It is necessary to develop criteria for assessment of student knowledge during exams; clear minimum and maximum examination requirements in regards to the students need to be established in order to prevent violation of student rights during the exams.
5. It is necessary to take measures to enhance the role of Student Councils in the activities and self-governance of a higher education institution.

To the Rectors of Pedagogical Higher Education Institutions

1. It is necessary to develop and implement measures on future strengthening of the process of democratization in the system of institutional governance and on active involvement of students in self-governance.
2. It is necessary to develop and implement a number of measures aimed at increasing the legal awareness of students by means of both extra-class and in-class hours. It is necessary to develop an efficient procedure of complaints in conflict cases between students and lecturers.
3. Publicity of university activities and transparency of decisions should be ensured, using all the available information tools, including, *inter alia*, university press and wall information.

4. It is necessary to ensure the effective participation of students in decision-making in terms of both decisions related to them, and decisions concerning the activities of the institution in general.

To Student Councils and Other Associations in the Higher Education Institutions

In order to shape a culture of democracy and new democratic values among the students, as well as to enhance their civil activity, regular seminars and training courses on the constitutional rights of citizens of the RoA, the rights of students and the instruments for their protection, the principles of self-governance, and the role of non-governmental organizations and associations in building a civil society need to be organized.