

A KEY STUDY FROM TURKEY: NECESSITY OF MODIFICATION IN EDUCATION AT COMMUNICATION FACULTIES WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF DIGITALIZED STUDENT IDENTITY

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Abstract: Digital media, smart phones and tablets have become an inseparable part of people's daily life. Producing knowledge, communication and getting information has become easier but at the same time, the reality and trueness of these became a discussion subject. Students can get any information through the internet; they can reach data fast and copy paste. Therefore, this is why creativity and individuality of papers and projects have to be queried. Academicians, lecturers have to use technology better than ever and almost have to become a specialist in technology.

Digital students like to watch and record. They almost never write; they just take photos of the subjects. In this kind of education model, something has to change in terms of quality. Needs of today's journalism classrooms are different from the past. Teachers have to change their teaching ways from classical models to more interactive and multimedia user concepts.

New generation is growing up in a digital media age; they socialize and cultivate themselves by user-friendly applications. This situation causes the generation to get used to an easier life. Lean back and wait to be taught without any effort. Consumption culture is propping stolidity even in learning practices. In this case, this paper aims to understand what must be done as modification. A small research is done with 50 students asking what are the three things needed for a quality education. The same question was also asked to 12 lecturers as a focus group. This paper discusses advantages and disadvantages of technology for students. The results of the questionnaire is interesting; it seems need of freedom is more demanded than technology etc.

Keywords: Digital students, journalism students, quality in education

INTRODUCTION

It is possible to define today's society as the digital individuals' society who lives in a digital era. Thus the youth, the students, of this society are digital identities. "Identity is an ambiguous and slippery term. It has been used—and perhaps overused—in many different contexts and for many different purposes, particularly in recent years" (Buckingham 2008: 1). This paper examines identity within the context of online accounts and cultures. Societal, political, economic and technological developments happen almost in the blink of an eye and students follow all of these on the internet. There are currently thousands of online spaces that allow students to experiment with identity in an artificial world (Gonzales and Shohat and Stam, 2003: 300). Lecturers' observations of university students, shows that digital students live in a digital world and they do not even know how to note down.

In a fast changing world; quality, especially in education, is accepted as one of the most prominent and irreplaceable features. Before laying out the essential conditions for quality in education, notion of quality has to be defined. First, it has to be decided whether we are talking about quantitative elements like luxurious facilities and educational tools or content and quality. According to Oxford dictionary, the definition of quality is "The standard of something as measured against other things of a similar kind; the degree of excellence of something." The definition according to Cambridge is, "How good or bad something is..." Quality is a very important parameter that differentiates an organization from its competitors. Because it gives the best product and it is competitive. There are surveys worldwide published

revealing which universities offer students the best quality of life, ranks institutions by analyzing a range of other surveys and data including surveys on living costs, employment and salary on graduation and student satisfaction. However, in this study when we talk about quality it is mostly about the contextual knowledge; it is not about properties of schools. Education is a long-term investment for a human being. Based on this statement, it would be true that academic achievement should not be the only criterion when judging the success of the universities.

Digital students often express themselves by starting blogs. As it is widely known, “Live Blogging combines conventional reporting with curation, where journalists sift and prioritise information from secondary sources and present it to the audience in close to real time, often incorporating their feedback” (Thurman, 2013:1). Journalism is more than just a homework or a job. For example a photojournalist can send ripples across the world with the publication of an iconic photograph, for social change. In a modern media environment it is almost impossible for journalists and students not to be aware of the impact of technology on their ways of working there are different ways of working and media platforms that publish their work (Chapman and Nuttall, 2011:99).

Amy Guttmann did ask an important question at Spencer Foundation Conference: What should universities aim to achieve for individuals and society?

“It is reassuring to those who believe in the worth of a university education—and all the more so in a high-unemployment, low-growth economy—to show that the average person with a college education earns a lot more over her lifetime than the average high school graduate, even after subtracting the cost of college. But it should not be too reassuring, because the economic payback to university graduates is not the only—or even the primary—aim of a university education. To know whether a university education is worthwhile, we need to identify and defend the mission of a university education. Call this the mission question: What should universities aim to achieve for individuals and society? What is our ethical mission with regard to educating undergraduates? I defend three fundamental aims of an undergraduate education in the 21st century.

The first aim speaks to who is educated and calls for broader access to higher education based on talent and hard work, rather than income and wealth: Opportunity, for short.

The second aim speaks to the core intellectual aim of a university education, creative understanding, which I will argue calls for a greater integration of knowledge not only within the liberal arts and sciences but also between the liberal arts and professional education: Creative Understanding, for short.

The third aim is an important sequel to the successful integration of knowledge, enabling and encouraging university graduates to contribute to society on the basis of their creative understanding: Contribution, for short (<http://www.upenn.edu/president/meet-president/what-makes-university-education-worthwhile>”).

Some people believe that the aim of university education is to provide graduates better jobs. Whereas some others believe, that there is much more benefits of university education both for individuals and society. It is clear that a degree does help someone get a better job to a certain extent, but it gives no guarantee. According to Althusser, one of the dominant Ideological State Apparatus is the schools. Universities have to provide a student the world culture more

than a job oriented education and this has to be discussed. Journalism is a kind of job that does not even need a diploma. This profession needs more sense of wonder, talent of questioning more and investigation. So journalism education in this digital era has to contain much more culture than before. It has to give students more curiosity and more will of creative writing. Education has to teach journalism students the ethical codes of the profession specially to avoid from this infollution on internet.

METHODOLOGY

In this study, a literature review, observation and questionnaire that consists of one open-ended question are used as the method. Afterreview of literature and conveying the previous 7 years of observation in communication faculty, the results of the questionnaire that made with the students and faculty members is shared. The interview was carried out with 50 students and 12 faculty members. The students were randomly chosen from the Communication Faculty of Maltepe University. They were only asked to write down their age and gender on the questionnaire form. The data that also includes age and genderinputs of faculty members are evaluated on Excel.

FINDINGS

The research question is set as: “What are the top 3 important things in higher education according to you?” The questions were asked face to face and the answers were recorded as written. 12 lecturers and 50 students answered the question by writing 3 sentences each. Lecturers’ first criterion was self-determination. The most frequently touched upon issue among the students turn out to be endowed with the freedom of debate. Apart from this, the students’ demand for quality in education follow as this:

- not being under pressure in class,
- freedom of speech in classes,
- active debate environment,
- raising responsible and participant individuals,
- advanced technological infrastructure; availability of sources, a good library, availability for practice at school
- lecturers who are experienced, academically successful and able to speak foreign languages
- giving importance to foreign language education,
- field experienced academicians who care about students’ comprehension level,
- faculty members without arrogance,
- mutual understanding,
- Academicians who are neither very intimate nor very distant,
- Creating projects such as newspaper, civil society initiative, social activity etc.,
- Not having too many private universities. The existing private schools should not prioritize income before everything.
- Students should be prepared for professional life through personal development seminars, interviews with journalist from the sector and forums about professional topics
- Minimum theory; maximum practice
- Dignity, discipline, stability.

Demands of lecturers (for academicians) include:

- Autonomy, independent education policies in classes, production of free thought and respect to this production,
- A well-equipped library, being fully provided with technical and physical conditions necessary for education,
- Teaching staff that is enthusiastic and enjoys producing. Having chance to do interdisciplinary studies,
- Being scientific, having practice and theory under the same roof,
- Enthusiastic and interested students,
- Indorsement to participate national and international conferences, seminars, workshops,
- Educators who are able to follow the developments around the world and financial support for it,
- Not teaching only in the classes, being able to relate students to real life outside the class,
- Sports, arts and cultural activities should be given importance at the campus,
- Transferring correct knowledge through right techniques,
- Changing the system which makes students merely exam oriented,
- Environmental planning within the campus should be made suitable for producing together and letting students socialize.

DISCUSSION

Lecturers should motivate students to be success oriented and should encourage them, give them confidence. However, this confidence should not create a sense of being superior and drive the students apart from ethical behaviors. It should not make students cruel and indifferent to each other or to society, it should make them world citizens who know about human rights and respect global values.

There are various forms of learning. “These diverse forms of learning are reflected in expressions of identity, how individuals express independence and creativity, and in their ability to learn, exercise judgment, and think systematically (Buckingham: 2008)”. Digitalized ‘journalism students’ have to improve their writing techniques and should consider that it would be even better to see their works published. This thought would give them the motivation and desire to create more. Erich Fromm says in his book *The Art of Loving* that “Love isn't something natural. Rather it requires discipline, concentration, patience, faith, and the overcoming of narcissism. It isn't a feeling, it is a practice.” Therefore, when the lecturers themselves learn and try to teach, they have to be patient. “To be successful at what we do requires making it as charming as a game. Just like the professional athletes turning the game into a profession, we can also turn a profession into a game” (Casson 2000). It is possible not to have monotonous classes. Gathering news and writing is an adventurous business; it is almost as fun as a game to those who are truly interested in. Whereas it is tiresome and torturous for a student who is not into it. Here, it is important for a lecturer that he/she should love what she does and tries her best to endear it to students too. While maintaining this adventure, one should also keep in mind that one should not forget his/her responsibility regarding the correctness of the news.

University students should be taught at least one foreign language. A person who cannot speak any foreign languages in today’s global world cannot possibly make best of the international culture as much as he/she should. He/she would be destined to live with stereotypes and the limited experience he/she gets from where he/she is. Whereas university

education is not –and should not- be something that provides students with diplomas to enable them get jobs. Before anything else, it should endow students with an understanding of culture. For instance, it should raise individuals who follow traffic rules and who do not commit to another person's life. It should provide its graduates with individuality, should encourage them to become questioning and productive people. Unlike what most people think, universities are not places that only provide students with a profession; there are technical high schools for that purpose. Thus, the ones who prefer it that way can quickly start working. A person who prefers university education should be equipped with a certain level of intellectual profundity. He/she should get to know different parts of the world and his/her own country by reading books, going to theater and movies, watching documentaries; maybe even by being physically mobile if possible. Nowadays there are different opportunities as EU Erasmus and Farabi Programs, various internship chances and ability to take part in volunteer projects. Faculty members should let students know about these issues and encourage them to be active.

A student is not a tabula rasa. They all have different cultural, economic, sociological, religious and political backgrounds. They have their own norms and value judgements. It certainly is difficult to change prejudices.

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

If we generalize the results of this study, academicians should be able to follow scientific and technologic developments around the world closely, and should renew themselves accordingly. They should convey the knowledge they gather to others through panels, seminars, conferences, symposiums and workshops. After all, sharing leads to improvement. Lecturers should compare traditional teaching methods to technologic-scientific methods and they should improve new teaching models depending on their situation. Even in the year 1937, Muvaffak Uyanıkhad emphasized in his work that newspapers could be used in education as a part of teaching plan. He said students has to be informed of daily news of the country and of the world. His book recommending teachers to use newspapers as teaching material was published in 2007 by Gazi University Communication Faculty (Güngör, 2013:31). Today's world, gives a lot of different opportunities to teachers such as documentaries and video news to understand the world and to teach itto digital studentsby more effective ways. Lecturers can use this new technology products in the classes whenever is needed to strengthen the subjects.

Lecturers should also try to develop their own talents as well as students' talents. They should teach creative writing. Students should not write papers for only getting marks; they should write for themselves and for feeling the joy of creating something. Students should be connected with the sector, they should be provided with chances of internships at the newspapers with journalists. People from the industry should often be invited to campuses and should keep in touch with students to enable them follow the improvements and changes. Students should be given the opportunity to practice. They should subscribe to agencies in order to provide news for their own student journals, student should be able to do fieldwork and experience the production of real news for a paper.

One of the obstacles before high quality postgraduate education is that students choose their departments after an exam which most of the time lead them to go to the different departments from their original wish. The unconscious choices made during this processes cause lack of enthusiasm, lack and loss of motivation and most of the time disappointment towards life in general.

Quality in education requires a holistic approach. If someone or an institution says that, he/she/it has great quality –be it as a university, a lecturer or as a student, this statement mostly causes a delusion. Considering oneself good enough is important, but at the same time it requires sustainability and improvement. Monitoring whether you have reached the standards, demanded quality or checking and correcting the missing points are very significant issues. New plans and programs have to be enhanced if needed. University administrators and lecturers should note the negative and positive aspects of their systems. They should immediately address the failures and problems. Having a superficial view of the problem actually never solves small problems and small problems get bigger with time. Thus, we should end by remembering the anecdote:

“For want of a nail the shoe was lost.
For want of a shoe, the horse was lost.
For want of a horse, the battle was lost;
For the failure of battle, the kingdom was lost
All for the want of a horse-shoe nail.”

Quality education requires ideals and diligence of the teaching staff.

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