

**Precondition of being a university: “to be” a university, to be YÖK*
(Institution of Higher Education) “or not to be”**

Alâeddin Şenel

A Summary

- In the primitive egalitarian communities of the past, education didn't exist as an institution; in fact there was not a need for it. Young generations learned in practice what was necessary to survive while they cooperated subsistence activities.
- We can see the first form of organised education with the rise of classed societies in the civilized world; namely Sumerian city states (c.3.000 BC). The first school was Ziggurat scribe priest college for the education of temple-bound full time employees. What they had been taught and then what they had taught was religious ideology in the form of illogical believes.
- I can compare them with the Sophistes of Greek city-state (c.400 BC) whom I like to call “free thinking labourer.” Why? Because Sophistes, unlike Sumerian priests, were a kind of salesmen in the “free market of ideas” and the students “could buy” any kind of knowledge that they needed during the political discussions in the Assembly to defend their vested interests.
- During the Middle Ages, both in the Christendom and in the Muslim world, formal education was organized and controlled by the clergy/hoca for the aim of indoctrinating scholastic logic and certain dogmas that would reproduce “estate order of the feudal society”
- In the Western feudal society there were Cathedral schools in the larger cities. However different kind of schools were established to provide professional education for the future lawyers, physicians etc. in Padua (1222 AD), Naples (1224 AD) Salerno (medicine school) and Bologna (the law).
- Students from all over the Christendom, organised themselves in special guilds that

they called “Universitas” (in Latin) which means “universal union of students”. They hired professors for lectures. Later universities became unions of students and professors.

- Meanwhile some of the Cathedral schools such as Reims, Cologne, Utrecht, transformed themselves into universities giving priority to secular subjects. Thus they became antithesis of religious schools, so that free and critical thinking become their “second nature”.
- During the bourgeois revolutions (18th - 19th centuries) secular education and scientific institutions were established in accordance with the bourgeois world view; namely lycee, academie and modern university to teach contemporary sciences and technology.
- But as soon as bourgeois capitalist order was securely established, the course of history was turned backwards, in the direction against scientific, critical, free thinking and education. I can see this trend as a “U” turn that follows the below steps almost in chronological order:
 - Critique of religious believes and otherworldly values abandoned; theism was made popular as a first step.
 - Atheism became out and agnosticism in.
 - Call for religious toleration even for antidemocratic, theocratic sects.
 - Respect for religions, sects and religious orders without criticizing them become an expectation.
 - To blame one who criticizes so called the “God’s word”, even if his wording was against universal peace, human rights and humanistic values.
 - And lastly to criminalize and punish (by law articles) one who doesn’t respect, therefore “injure holy values” of the “public as they say”.

- We can see very similar policy change (in fact a “U turn”) soon after the Secular Turkish Republic was established. A few examples will suffice to support it:
 - Religious education was allowed besides scientific schooling. Courses for recital of Kur’an (“Kur’an Kursları” in Turkish) and schools for religious cadres (namely İmam Hatip okulları) that both served “to stab secular education in the back.”
 - At the higher education level introduction of “Faculty of Theology” (“İlahiyat Fakültesi”) undermined universities and the so called faculties that served as a “Horse of Troy” to open gates of campuses for militia of Muslim religion sect.
- What are the reasons of all these planned attacks on contemporary scientific education institutions and universities?
 - When trade unions have been suppressed at the economic level and the pro-ethnic and the pro-labour (blue and white collar) parties have been removed from the Parliament at the political level, children of working classes with class consciousness and a progressive part of intelligentsia have had to assume pioneering role for class struggle.
 - As a result, the party in power and conservative and reactionary sections of ruling class have directed their class war to scientific education and institutions.
 - One of the policies they put into action on this way was “to develop and expand universities over the country” as they say. In fact their aim was to disgrace, to minimize, even to silence, in short to “de-universitize” the society.
 - This is not a sincere way to improve university.
- I have offered a sincere proposal for the improvement and expansion of universities years ago:
 - First (precondition) metropol universities must have more than enough academics so that when they send academicians to new universities, they should

not become weaker.

- Second in order to establish a university campus in a provincial city, that city should be developed enough to such an economic, social and cultural level that it would allow the people of the district to benefit from the positive effects of the university and not *vice versa*.