

Education: A Culture-Acquirement Beyond Textbook-Study

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Abstract: Education shapes a child's personality and mentality while filling his mind with information. Education, eventually makes the student gain and keep new and desired patterns of behavior. The basics of a given education program are indeed transmitted from the essential textbooks via the steady efforts of the faculty members, who undertake the roles of intermediaries. Nevertheless; beyond and above the official knowledge represented by the textbooks, the educative climate in its entirety (library, social facilities, gymnasiums, the human environment of fellow-students and teaching staff etc.) provides the cultural essence of one's upbringing, which is at least as important as the domain of sheer knowledge.

Key words: education, educative, teacher, professor, student, role model, institution

1. Introduction

Through education, individuals acquire certain desirable behavior patterns. This fact alone makes education very significant in terms of ways regarding how to behave properly in given circumstances.

Education is a social institution. It exists in all societies in one form or another. Borrowing Sociologist Merton's key terms, it has *manifest* as well as *latent* functions.

The former comprises providing knowledge, socializing the child, bringing about science and technology improvements; the latter involves protecting the child, preventing vice, raising the status and providing good company (Çaya, 2013; with reference to Tezcan, 1992, p. 20).

The current strive of the world in education is to propagate it widely (so as to reach out to the poor, deprived and oppressed social layers) on one hand, and to democratize it (student council activities) on the other hand.

2. Brief History

Historical Stages of Education in Turkey follow the *madrassa*, late Ottoman school (*mektep*) and new school eras¹. The kinds of education are, broadly speaking, regular (planned and programmed in formal schools) as well as casual (vocational training, seminars of any kinds, various courses for grown-ups) (ibid).

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¹ After Reformation (Tanzimat) Abdülmecid (1839–1861) replaced old neighborhood schools (financed with donations) with state-supported primary schools. Junior high schools (*rüştiye*) and high schools (*idadi*) came into being in big numbers. Higher Schooling dates even before: Military Medical School (1827), Military Staff Officer School (1834, 1846) and Law School. Saffet Paşa (1814–1883) is a monumental name in those efforts. (A *madrassa*-graduate, he had gotten a career in Foreign Affairs) (Çaya, 2013; with reference to Mardin).

As for the pioneers of Turkish education in nearer times; *Ziya Gökalp* (1876–1924) stressed a “national” education.

Prince Sabahattin (1877–1948) criticized a system which devalues personality and also promotes a central tendency for administration. He bitterly complained about lack of encouragement for entrepreneur-like attitudes and free development, ever since the midst of the family (Tezcan, 1992, pp. 19–20).

Ethem Nejat (1882–1921) advocated for a kind of education aiming for rural development and was the very first inspiration provider for the idea of the village institutions (ibid).

İsmail Hakkı Baltacıoğlu (1889–1978) objected to the imitation of the West and the sheer novelties in form, rather than content. Trips to the environment, school theatre, teaching of art and crafts, raising of productive men were his basic themes (ibid).

3. Typologies of Teachers

A Category of Teacher Typologies goes as follows: Formal knowledge carrier, an agent for socialization (an adapter to future life), a provider of novelties and creativity, a focuser on measurement and evaluation (a meticulous grade-assigner).

Another similar category of teachers comprises; respectively; the academic type (an expert on his subjects who attaches utmost importance to knowledge), the student-oriented kind (a surrogate parent for them, who even neglects his own home for their sake), the missionary sort (who stresses moral values; even though he may not be a suitable role-model², himself).

Among the given classifications, in the long run, it is probably the missionary type who is the most influencing and useful one. A shoe-shine man dropped out of junior high school once talked to me about his former history teacher. He said that he does not remember the terms and clauses of important armistices or agreements; but he vividly remembers a life lesson from the mouth of that teacher and here is the anecdote:

A girl fell ill hopelessly and the doctor told the truth to the family. She was bound to die before the winter sets in. The autumn leaves were falling off one by one. The girl eaves dropped the bitter information. As the foliage got thinner on the trees, her hope was also diminishing. But a curious thing changed her future estimation. A certain leaf was insisting on not falling. Days passed on and the leaf held on, reinforcing the newly burgeoning hopes in the heart of the bed-ridden girl. Eventually she recovered. When she walked to the window, she discovered that the leaf was a painted picture on the window glass. A neighboring painter devised the idea to inspire some hope into her soul.

4. Other Auxiliary Educative Institutions

Let us note that other agents of education also come into play: For Turkey one had been the State Industry before the onset of the privatization process.

The examples are literally numerous like engineers being role-models for public and the children in terms of *savoir-vivre/Lebensart*/good manners in their social facilities (company eating house); promotion of sports in

² If they can be living role models, so much the better, of course. In junior high school I had a history teacher, who had studied at Istanbul University while performing the profession of a municipal official. In his blue uniform, he was entitled to control the shops and public places. Sometimes he was on guard in his service station. He found opportunities to attend classes as much as possible and kept reading the assignments. Eventually he graduated and changed his job. He was a moralist and an elegant Istanbulite. He had a strong, determined will-power and persistence and perseverance.

provincial leagues thanks to representative football teams established and maintained by the sugar plants, railroad administration, gunpowder installations, pulp-and-paper industry and cement industry; granting of theater buildings to school ceremonies by the local government factory; providing room and board provision for single teachers; showing documentary movies and foreign cinema movies; housing wondering theater companies and exhibitions (Çaya, 2013).

The other auxiliary educative institution for Turkey is the military. In accordance with the draft system, each healthy male is conscripted at his young age and serves for a specific period. Illiterate soldiers are first taught how to read and write. Practical hygiene rules are indoctrinated. Night courses contain concise information about all aspects of life. Many soldiers learn crafts and workmanship while in the army (meal-cooking, waiter task in an eatery, telephone operator's job, photography, vehicle- driving etc.).

A newspaper clipping (*Milliyet*, February 12, 1996) was narrating how family planning is instilled to plain soldiers. The pedagogical breakthrough is astonishingly effective. *A praying-rosary (chapelet) contains 28 beads, representing days, in three colors: The first five yellow beads stand for the menstruation days of the wife. Then come five green and seven red beads followed by eleven green beads again. The loop is thus completed. During the red days the probability of pregnancy is high. The green days represent the safe dates.*

Let us point out that Russian author *Grigory Petrov* (1868–1925) vividly describes the contribution of the Finnish military to the development of the country, Finland, *the Land of the White Lilies*. However; to achieve this end, the barracks first reformed themselves³.

5. The Learning Climate

Various activities like exhibitions of art and poetry, music chorus and recitals, movies, theater plays, conferences add much more to the intellectual formation than any textbook, in a cumulative manner.

The relative freedom of expression and speech and the *de facto immunity*⁴ against law observed in comparison to down town areas, makes a typical campus more of a liberated place even in a developing country, where full democratization is not ripe enough, yet.

It should be pointed out that such freedom may sometimes backfire for young and depressed people and cause detrimental consequences like getting addicted to narcotics; being drifted into extreme (either right-wing or left-wing) political views or even political action.

Once a poem exhibition was opened at a campus in Ankara by a young-and-pessimistic Turkish poet. The State Radio and Television Institution (TRT) would have definitely censured such an exhibition, on the grounds that it would sink the public morale (This clause is written as a condition, among other items, when it comes to participation in a music piece competition arranged by that organization).

The mere title given to the exhibition was chosen in low spirits: I Like you Little, Life. A couplet is embedded in my mind with its keen theme of disappointment: *While waiting for the White Prince mounted on his white horse;/A shadow got discernible in the distance: That of the Black Prince mounted on his black donkey!*

³ Under the rule of Sweden, the garrison was bursting with rough, brutal, ugly swearing words. Privates, officers and even generals were employing swear-words. They were cursing mothers, fathers or even God Almighty [*jamais/never!*]. Young Finnish officers terminated those awful habitudes and brought cleanliness of body, word and moral principles. They taught the plain soldiers to wash their hands before meals and to clean their faces and teeth in the morning. They devised night plenary sessions for reading, speaking and debating (Petrov, new edition, 1994).

⁴ I remember a canteen-announcement written on a piece of white paper saying that foreign (contraband) cigarettes had arrived; at a time when foreign cigarettes were illegal on the market in Turkey.

(The original stanzas were in Turkish).

Another cynical short poem was something like: Bla-bla-bla Student-Numbered Suzanne! My high-school classmate and my very first platonic love!/I have just found out that your visit-price [in the brothel] has attained the numeral bla-bla-bla! (The original stanzas were in Turkish).

6. Effective Role Models

Above all; professors themselves have more impact on the young minds of the students than anyone can imagine. Everything extraordinary and worthy is appreciated and internalized and as an eager student one tries to emulate those ways to the best of his capacity.

I for my part, always tried to sort out the good traits of my professors from among the bad traits. A studious instructor with a very high IQ and bursting with scientific ambition and curiosity did appeal to me with those virtue of his. But his cultural degeneration represented by his hanging around stark naked in the gymnasium after having a match with his colleagues and taking a shower, was equally repulsive!

Decent, behaved, politely and shyly conservative symbols of honor represented in the personalities of professors are more impressing than those of any other professionals. A friend of mine had such an elderly professor, a sheer Ottoman gentleman at Istanbul University and I got to know the honorable person through his narrations. While proctoring his own examinations; he would urge the students to avoid *lengthy* replies and provide *concise*⁵ ones instead; reinforcing his requirement with a physical sign: The thumb and the index finger brought together; to represent a tiny, minute size!

Another “vicarious” meeting with another exemplary professor occurred through the memories of a Mathematics teacher, who had his degree from the Aegean University. On a certain exam paper, the assistants had printed the expression “give an example for each case!”. The genteel scholar stepped into the room during the exam for an announcement and made a correction by altering the imperative form into a request mode: “*Would you please* give an example for each case?”.

Still, a Physics teacher once said that one of his professors had once warned the class: “If I am late, do not go away but wait for a while. The traffic may cause me to come late; but I never ever omit a class entirely! As a matter of fact; if one day I do not show up here, be sure that I dropped dead! No other excuses whatever for an eventual absence of mine!”

In a bad situation an authority figure’s good words boost the morale. In my senior year in high school I was staying in a four-student-dormitory room. One roommate suddenly left for his home city, which was hit by an earthquake. Soon after, another’s father passed away and he in turn left for his hometown. The remaining two of us became uneasy in expectation of a new calamity targeting us. We pronounced our anxiety to the vice-principal, who was also the housemaster and who used to inspect the dormitories every morning regularly. He thought for a few seconds and then said: “Well, things can only get better!”. Those words came by like a magic balsam, healing our upset psychological states and improving the circumstances immediately! (Çaya, CBT-number 523).

As for the previous housemaster, an English teacher; he was a strikingly interesting and imaginative person full of ingenious ideas, from time to time. One afternoon he would measure with a stop watch the timing of volunteers who race the staircases up to the entrance to the dormitory building. Some other time, he would

⁵ For the adjectives “lengthy” and “concise”, the professor would not use the commonly-used Turkish words “ayrıntılı” and “öz”; but instead, he would employ the pompous Ottoman words: “Not ‘mufassal’ but ‘muhtasar’ yes ‘muhtasar’, dear students!”.

instigate the arrangement of a song contest. (The former English teacher was to proceed his career later on with a Ph.D. degree in archeology).

Once he posted a note on the bulletin board requesting the student with the biggest feet to see him for a present. But, alas! The brand new sport shoes were too big⁶ even for that student!

On another occasion in one October evening; he gave a wonderful slide show to us, the boarding students, in the dormitory building study hall. The topic was his summer impressions of Anatolia at the time, as taken through his amateur camera. My first interest in anthropology could very well have been stirred during this one-hour-long presentation session. A picture still vividly embedded in my memory was the slide featuring a public toilet in a remote village:

On the archaic entrance door whose aged wood veins were bulging, had been scribbled with white chalk in crooked small lettering: "Big job 25 *piastres*, small job 10 *piastres*". The housemaster looked away from the audience with a shy smile and a blush discernible in the twilight as the scene suddenly emerged on the screen.

During a course in America, our female instructor once said that his octogenarian father still calls the southerners the *rebels*, by reference to the Civil War. Hearing that information was sharpening one's sense of history more than any book or encyclopedia could have done.

During the same course; we had another female instructor whose father was a retired Navy officer. She had been indoctrinated with concepts like honor and dignity and pride ever since her childhood. On the verge of weekend holidays, she would constantly repeat her motto: "Take care of yourselves well, on the weekend. Please do not bring shame on your name!" When one considers the fact that nobody got in trouble on a weekend; it must have been an effective warning, indeed!

7. Some Heroes of a Haldun-Taner-Story

In one of his partly autobiographical⁷ short story; *Haldun Taner* talks about an academic council in 1965 at the Faculty of Letters of Istanbul University, where one of three associate-professors should be promoted to full professorship for the Chair of Anthropology. The competition is severe and lobbying is in full swing:

Imadettin Bey, coming out of the men's room, had opened his sheet-sized handkerchief and was drying his hands. [He reminded of a provincial official who had just performed his ablutions in preparation for the prayer in a mosque].

It was not agreeable for Professor *Sedat Germiyanoglu* to see this pockmarked professor, at all; maybe because he reminded him of his grandfather, the former sexton of a mosque, [a fact he was repudiating in his mind]. He himself was reckoned to be the most Western professor in the Faculty and the other the most obstinately Oriental and Ottoman of the academic staff.

At every opportunity, he underlined their differences of training, style and mentality in a manner *Imadettin Bey* could not easily comprehend [due to his lack of an Anglo-Saxon education]. *Imadettin Bey* used to respond to those remarks with some coarse lines of classical poetry or resounding quatrains from the satirist *Neyzen*⁸.

⁶ The feet of Turkey's population on average are smaller than Americans'. The biggest shoe size was 45 on the market until recent times. Once a shoe seller in Lüleburgaz proudly said that Oil-Wrestler Shaban from the town of Vize bought a pair of size 45-sneakers at his shop.

⁷ Indeed; translator Geoffrey Lewis notes at the top of the story that "some of the author's former colleagues at Istanbul University still delight in identifying the originals of the characters in this story".

⁸ Neyzen Tevfik had philosophical critical poems. He would not abstain from employing sheer swearing-words in rhymes, at times.

At this moment *Sedat Bey* received the scent of a cigar; which; *Sadi Tümay* was puffing at. *Sedat Bey* consoled himself that it was only a King Edward. But, no! Damn him! It was a *Walter Upmann*. This fellow *Sadi* could somehow procure high-class invitations all over the city! Once there, he never budged from in front of the buffet, eating steadily and with complete assurance depositing three or four cigars in his top pocket, as if he were loading ammunition into a bandolier. *Sedat Germiyanoghlu* had particularly noticed that *Sadi* always chose these cigar interludes for reading his *Le Monde*.

[When *Şefkati Bey* took the floor and makes a slip of the tongue regarding those staff members who had no Ph.D. degrees despite their titles of full professor; double-doctorate *Jevat Bey* defended such colleagues as being equally worthy] and a heavy, oppressive silence fell. It got broken by *Ali Rıza Bey*. “I haven’t got two doctorates, like *Jevat Bey*. I haven’t even got one. [So, I was of course hurt by the previous remark of *Şefkati Bey*]” said he.

Sedat Germiyanoghlu groaned inwardly. This was *Ali Rıza*’s regular practice. Being offended on one occasion would be his excuse for missing the next seven or eight meetings. *Ali Rıza* continued his speech, stringing together verses from *Nefi*, *Karajaoghlan*, *Muallim Naji* and *Eshref*⁹ (abridged from Lewis’ translation of Taner, 1988).

8. Conclusion

Education involves textbooks, of course. Then come other books, which support the courses. But books which do not pertain to the courses directly while contributing to one’s cultural improvement are also there, to be considered. Finally; all books left aside; the climate of education and especially role-model-teaching-staff have tremendous impact upon a student’s intellectual formation.

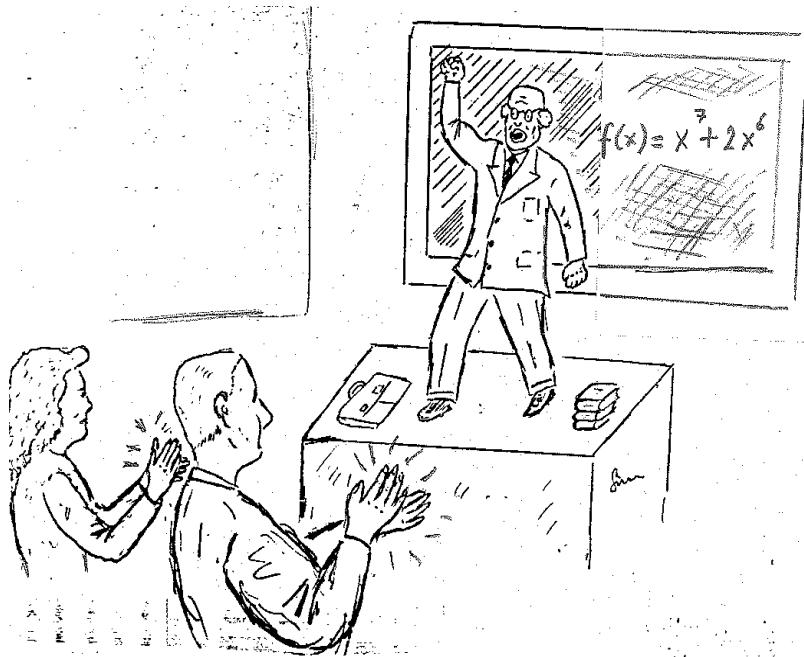


Figure 1 An Enthusiastic Instructor Usually Leaves His “Trace” in the Memories of the Students

⁹ All four are very famous Turkish poets. Besides; all have satirical verses as their strong points. Especially *Eshref* was as skilful in using swear-words as previously mentioned *Neyzen*.



Figure 2 Years Ago, An Entrepreneur-Minded Student Arranged for A Liquid-Yoghurt Selling Facility at Late Night Hours, on A Campus; Which Ran Smoothly for A Few Weeks, (Until An Interruption Came to Abolish It for Some Reason or Other).



Figure 3 What Is the Use of Good Knowledge, If Moral Principles Are Lacking?



Figure 4 Practicing Sports Is Part of Making Much of the Educative Atmosphere



Capped Child— “Our milk is diminishing!”
Open headed Child— “We still have plenty of milk, how nice!”

Figure 5 An Optimistic World-View Is the Complementary Ingredient of All Beneficial Knowledge and Culture, at the Final Analysis

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