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Education for Broadcasting

A Comparative Study on Turkish and American Broadcast Students

Abstract

This study, based on a comparative research, aims at casting light upon the nature of the close relationship between socio-cultural discourses and broadcast education at universities. The hypothesis is that dominant socio-cultural discourses within a particular society should be expected to determine the framework of broadcast education, rendering it only to a carrier or reinforcing agent of such discourses, that is, a dependent variable in the process of upbringing the would-be broadcasters. Hence a reformulation of the curricula is required such as to provide students the ability to critically comprehend and discuss, in relation to the globalizing tendencies, the socio-cultural and political issues in their own countries.

Yayıncılık Eğitimi

Türk ve Amerikalı Yayıncılık Öğrencileri Arasında Karşılaştırmalı Bir Çalışma

Özet

Karşılaştırmalı bir araştırmaya dayanan bu çalışma, sosyo-kültürel söylemlerle üniversitelerdeki yayıncılık eğitimi arasındaki yakın ilişkinin doğasına ışık tutmayı amaçlamaktadır. Çalışmanın hipotezi, belli bir kültürdeki egemen sosyo-kültürel söylemlerin, yayıncılık eğitimi bu söylemlerin taşıyıcısı ya da pekiştiricisi bir etken -geleceğin yayıncılarının yetiştirilmesi sürecinde bir bağımlı değişken- haline getirerek, bu eğitimin çerçevesini belirlemesinin bekleneceğidir. Dolayısıyla, öğrencilere, küreselleşen eğilimleri ve ülkelerinin sosyo-kültürel ve siyasal konularını kavrayıp tartışabilme olanağını sağlayacak şekilde müfredatın yeniden formüle edilmesi gerekmektedir.

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Education for Broadcasting

A Comparative Study on Turkish and American Broadcast Students

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In the literature of communication studies, media professionals have frequently been a focus of communication scholars. Political, economical, social and organizational contexts in which they work, issues relating to professionalism and ethical codes they are assumed to have, have been analyzed rather in detail. However, as for the studies on the would-be media professionals, that is, the students enrolled in departments of journalism, broadcasting or related fields at universities, the same cannot be said.

1. Mainstream and Critical Approaches to Media Education

Education, to both mainstream and critical scholars, is a very important activity. For in its core, to mainstream scholars, lies the potential to raise the quality of human resources, and social and economic developmental activities; while, to critical scholars, it imposes upon students of meanings which are closely connected with power structures and relations of the society in question (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977), and "at present... has become a major means of social control" (Misgeld, 1985), which furthers "the corporate colonization of the life world of societies" (Deetz, 1992).

The same strife can be observed in the arguments of media scholars relating to the functioning of education for mass communication. The mainstream scholarly attention has mostly

been limited to improving the curricula and the quality of training, seeking a middle-of-the-road solution to meet the demands of both university-level education and media businesses, keeping pace with the technological developments in the field, and such. These concerns are particularly shown in numerous reports and publications relating to the topic, by both various professional and media educators' associations such as BEA and ADJMC.

Despite all such efforts, most of the problems concerning the administrative structure and curricula of the university-level media training, still persist. The chronic gap between the needs of media industries and the practices of university media departments continues (Swan and Hoy, 1983; Sherman, 1983), and consequently, media educators are caught between the opposing pulls of industry and the academy (Paundsepp, 1989), resulting perhaps in the sense of inferiority possessed by them to both professionals and academia (Sloan, 1990). In addition to the problems stemming from the conflicting demands of academe and business, the incapability of media-related university departments to keep up with the latest socio-cultural developments is displayed most clearly in the gender and race profile of the faculties. Studies mainly carried out at the US universities show that despite few direct gender-related discrimination is observed in promotion and tenure within media departments (Grunig, 1989), white males are still in dominance in the faculty of these departments, particularly at

tenureship and full professorship level (Schamber, 1989; Tickton, 1981; Hicks et al., 1980/1981).

Among some studies examining various training processes provided for journalists in different countries both comparatively (Gaunt, 1988) and as separate cases (Greenberg&Lau, 1990; Boyd-Barret, 1980; Evans, 1980; McBarnet, 1979) Jimada's study (1992) deserves special attention since it addresses the question in a developmental context and tries to locate his arguments within a much wider theoretical framework. Jimada argues that in the developing countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America, media training is mainly western-oriented, supplying communication industries with personnel which only further perpetuates the existing use of media, which in itself is a negation of the society's cultural values and identity. Nevertheless, this argument, mainly based on the "Dependency Theory", overlooks the fact that education, even in its most informal configuration, is an activity of installing into the minds of students the dominant values of the society, and these values need not to do with those of the people at-large. And as such it is dependent on and a part of the power structure of the society.

In the literature of education for media professionals, the most neglected are the studies on students of mass communication. Of only a handful studies, among of which are those dealing with gender problems (Beasley, 1986; Beasley&Theus, 1989), students' own evaluations and ratings of media professions (Dillon, 1990; Parsons, 1989), and drawing a profile of students enrolled in the university-level media programs (Peterson, 1981), two projects are outstanding both in scope and in questions they rise. Lee B. Becker et al's comprehensive research (1987) covers such topics as the US media training system and the impact of this system on would-be journalists and the "relationship between the university and the media in the area of personnel." Though useful in raising questions relating to the role and function of university-level

media education and structures of needs and routines of industry, this study places its primary emphasis on the analysis of the degree of correspondence between the outcome of education and demands of the industry, leaving aside the critical assessment of (by critically relocating) education within the broader power structure of society in general.

The same applies, to some extent, to a cross-cultural study by Sparks and Splichal (1989). This study, in addition to analyzing the would-be journalists' professional orientations, stresses the gender-related issues involved in the education of mass communications. In spite of bringing to the fore the significant differences between the meanings constructed by students among different societies, it fails to relate these differences to the socio-cultural and political discourses to which the students have been exposed, thus limits itself with the educational activities.

Issues relating to the education of media professionals have largely been overlooked by critical media scholars and put forward in such brief remarks as that "apprentice journalists are imbued with [the] ideals [that they gather and disseminate the vital information democracy needs to function; that they share a devotion to their craft; which they conduct in the light of widely accepted codes] during their education at American Universities" (Pauly, 1988, 246), or that '[Established Order] utilizes the education of journalists and other media professionals ... for doing what is expected' (Schiller, 1989, 8). Nevertheless these and similar remarks concerning the ideological role of pedagogical activities for media professionals have not led to larger scale studies seeking confirmation or refutation of such claims, or bringing new understandings for the relationship between educational and power discourses within the context of education for media professionals.

As explicitly can be seen, the main difference between mainstream and critical approaches is on the functioning of education. And this difference draws the present study's main

framework. To mainstream scholars education is an independent variable that alone can change and improve the social and cultural environment, while critical scholars conceptualize it as a dependent variable determined by the dominant power discourses and in turn reinforcing the dominance of them.

2. Aim and Methodology of the Study

The aim of this study is to observe the fact that, in a particular society, there is a strong relation between the dominant societal discourses and the meanings constructed by the students of broadcasting.

However, to operationalize education as a variable undoubtedly requires a much more elaborate analysis of course syllabuses, even a discursive analysis of courses themselves might be required. These have not been done in this study. However without such an elaborated analysis, education still can be put into use as a working variable. If significant differences between the students of two countries cannot be observed, then it can well be claimed that education (as a professional training thus globalizing activity) is effective as an explanatory variable and must be expected to exceed the boundaries of social discourses and to nourish the globalization (a global discourse constructing meanings shared by professional communities). Otherwise, it is going to be more reasonable to think that societal discourses (which are operationalized here, in this study as public service and commercial broadcast cultures) are the explanatory variables, and broadcast education as only a carrier or reinforcing agent of such discourses, that is, a dependent variable in the process of upbringing the would-be broadcasters.

In this study, societal discourses are expected to work as explanatory variables due to the fact that Turkey and the US, in the field of broadcasting have definitely distinct traditions and policies. Despite that broadcast policy practices in Turkey are

rapidly changing from public service to commercialism, it can be maintained that public service outlook in Turkey is still prevalent as opposed to the US's long and established experience in commercial broadcasting. Public service and commercial broadcasting notions not only create different broadcast cultures, but also are offspring of different social discourses. The public service broadcast culture emphasise the political and cultural responsibility of broadcasters towards their society and might be defined as paternalist and elitist, while commercial broadcast culture is mainly oriented to entertainment and profit and might be characterized as populist and businesslike.

These relations (if detected by the study) would also have further implications, most important of which is that in the field of mass communication, it cannot be spoken of a professionalism similar to the one in medicine or law, practices and codes of which are relatively universal which, to some extent, surpass the boundaries of individual countries. So it can easily be argued that broadcasting is a culture-bound undertaking despite the universal characteristics of the craft and tools of the profession.

Importance of such an observation lies in the fact that it questions the assigning, without taking into consideration the distinctive cultural discourses of particular societies, educational procedures and techniques primary role in the rehabilitation of the education for mass media and invites the scholars dealing with the issues of media education, to reconceptualize their work within a broader theoretical framework.

This study, based upon such basic assumptions of critical conceptions relating to education, has been conducted approximately at the same time period (early in 1993) both in Turkey and US, within the field of education for broadcasting. It covers the students of broadcasting of two higher education institutions in Turkey and the USA. The higher education

institutions selected for the research are the Department of Radio, Television and Film at Ankara University, Turkey and Department of Telecommunication at Michigan State University, the USA. It involves, from all grades and class levels, 137 randomly selected students, 81 of whom are American and 56 are Turkish. With such a limited and small-sized sample, the study does not assert that all the findings can be generalized. Also generalization is not the main concern of this study; its main and sole concern is to gain insight into the definitions by broadcast students from different broadcast cultures and to put forward the points which cannot be ignored, as is usually done, when dealing with the issues of education for mass communication.

The main instrument used in the study is a questionnaire that has been prepared in English, then translated into Turkish with some modifications to eliminate some distinct characteristics among two cultures. Maximum care has been paid to preserve the comparability of the data from respective countries. The questionnaire has been designed as to reveal how the students make sense of their positions, their future in the profession and the structure and functions of broadcasting. In assessing the statistical significance of relationships between variables the Chi-square test has been utilized, due to its aptness for small-size samples. Some in-depth interviews carried out along with the administration of questionnaires have provided additional valuable qualitative data for interpreting the tables.

3. Findings

3.a Functions of Broadcasting

Given the history (traditions, practices, experiences and conceptual frameworks) of broadcasting (that is, the broadcast culture) in the USA and Turkey, it is strongly expected that Turkish students be more public-service oriented whereas American students be more commercially-inclined. That is, meanings constructed by Turkish students on the functions,

importance and the place of broadcasting in a society would be framed by a paternalistic, elitist approach resulting from the dominant public service broadcast philosophy, as opposed to the American students' more businesslike and profit-oriented position.

Such a relationship, if found, can be taken as a confirmation of the hypothesis that the main aim of pedagogical activities in a society is likely to impose the dominant socio-cultural meanings upon students. To test this relationship, questions relating to the function of broadcasting have been addressed to the students. It is a widely accepted fact that commercialism in mass media is more inclined towards entertainment content as opposed to the public service notions of cultural and awareness-raising content. The answers to the question of the functions of broadcasting disclose a significant difference between the Turkish and American broadcast students (Table 1, 2, 3).

Table 1.
*Functions of
broadcasting for US
students*

Entertainment	31%
Information	39%
Cultural	8%
Awareness Rising	21%
Total	99%*

*does not total to 100 due to rounding. N=81

Table 2.
*Functions of
broadcasting for
Turkish students*

Entertainment	1%
Information	29%
Cultural	13%
Awareness Rising	57%
Total	100%

N=56

Table 3.
The most important function of broadcasting as a mode of mass communication

	USA	Turkey	Total
Entertainment	18%	0.7%	19%
Information	23%	16%	35%
Cultural	5%	7%	10%
Awareness Rising	12%	32%	36%
Total	59%	41%	100%

Chi-square=28.465, df=3; level of significance= <.001 N=137

The first two categories, entertainment and information are generally accepted as prominent characteristics of commercial broadcasting systems whereas the last two, cultural and awareness-rising, as public service conception. Data in the tables above, when read within this perspective, can be taken as an indicator that meanings assigned by students to the functions of broadcasting in either country differ in accordance with the meanings constructed by dominant broadcast philosophies.

In that case, 70% of American students assign commercial meanings to broadcasting, whereas 70% of Turkish students still make sense of broadcasting within a public service outlook. The qualitative data gathered during the study also shows that there is a significant difference between the students of both countries on the meaning of awareness-rising function. While most American students connect this function with information and define it as informing people of the events that influence their lives, as an outcome of investigative television journalism; to Turkish students awareness-rising means to make people understand the inequalities of the society and incite them to struggle for their rights. An important point here is that no meaningful difference has been observed between the meanings constructed by the students of different class levels or grades (educational variables) and in terms of gender.

3.b Control Agents

A similar difference has been observed in the answers to the question of the most powerful source in controlling both the form and content of broadcast material (Table 4).

Table 4.
Most powerful source controlling the form and content of broadcast material

	USA	Turkey	Total
Political	9%	20%	29%
Industrial	18%	20%	38%
Social	21%	1%	22%
Organizational	7%	3%	10%
Total	55%	44%	99%*

*does not total to 100% due to rounding.

Chi-square= 26.119, df=3, level of significance= <.001 N=122

For 37% of American students the most powerful controlling sources are social agents such as audiences, consumer groups, viewer organizations and associations, all of which can be grouped under the label of demand side of the broadcasting business. In accordance with the public service conception of overlooking the demands of audiences, only a very small portion of the Turkish students (3.6%) think that social agents are the most powerful ones in controlling the content and form of broadcast materials. For Turkish students, the most influential agents are political ones (45%). American students see the industrial agents (33%) as the second most influential source, a fact reflecting the commercial structure of the American broadcasting system. But it might be interesting to note that this same category is also seen by the Turkish students as the second important controlling agent, a fact most probably showing the signs of the transition of Turkey from a public service broadcast culture to a commercial one.

3.c Necessity of Schooling

Majority of the students from either country see schooling as a must for broadcasting, which is an indication of professionalism tendency among the would-be broadcasters (Tables 5 and 6). However during in-depth interviews, some complaints have been pronounced particularly by Turkish students, about the issue of employment by broadcast companies of people from distinct backgrounds as a fact casting shadow upon the professionalism within the broadcasting business.

Table 5.
Necessity of Schooling
For US students

Necessary	61%
Unnecessary	38%
Total	99%*

*does not total to 100 due to rounding N=81

Table 6.
Necessity of Schooling
For Turkish students

Necessary	72%
Unnecessary	28%
Total	100%*

N=54

Between the students of two countries a significant difference as to the necessity of schooling for the broadcast profession (a variable showing a strong tendency towards professionalism) and acceptability of distorting a broadcast message in order to make it more appealing (a variable indicating the level of adopting the professional codes) has not been observed. For 62% of the American and 72% of the Turkish broadcast students, schooling is integral to the broadcast profession. As for the question of acceptability of distorting a broadcast message to make it appear more appealing, 81% of the American and 85% of the Turkish students find it unacceptable.

However, when a relation is sought between the necessity of schooling and acceptability of distorting a broadcast message to make it more appealing, a positive relation has not been observed among the Turkish students, whereas among the American students a slightly significant relation has been noticed between the tendency of professionalism (feeling that schooling is necessary) and internalizing the ethical codes of the profession (Table -7). Such a relation leads us to a conclusion that professionalism tendency among the American students is more effective and stronger than it is in the Turkish students, a finding most probably resulting from the fact that they see broadcasting mainly as a commercial business.

Table 7. Schooling Acceptable Unacceptable Total

Acceptability of distorting a message to make it more appealing	Necessary	6%	54%	60%
	Unnecessary	13%	27%	40%
	Total	19%	81%	100%

Chi-square = 5.651, df= 1; level of significance= > .010 < .025 N= 78

A common trans-borders (in fact transatlantic) characteristic is seen in the ranking by the students of broadcasting as a profession. For both the American and Turkish students, broadcasting is an esteemed profession. 32% of the American students regard broadcasting as a highly-esteemed profession. Among the Turkish students this ratio is 29%. To the 65% of the American students and 69% of The Turkish students broadcasting is an esteemed profession. Only 2% of the American students and 7% of the Turkish students deem it as a low-esteemed profession. But the reasons elucidated by the students during interviews vary in accordance with the broadcast culture to which they belong. American students consider broadcasting as an esteemed profession, because first it provides access to the personalities and situations otherwise impossible to contact;

secondly, it gives opportunities for the first-hand experience of the environment, and finally it is a considerably well-paid job. For Turkish students, its distinction lies in the fact that broadcast professionals has the authority of instructing and influencing the society and people.

4. Conclusion

1. The most outstanding result of the research is that no any significant relation has been found between sociological variables (such as gender, race, SES) and meanings assigned by students to their prospective profession. Also, among both Turkish and American students no significant difference has been observed between the meanings constructed and educational variables such as schooling years, courses taken and grades. The only strong and significant relationship observed is that between dominant societal meanings assigned to the broadcasting practices (the broadcast culture of particular societies) and meanings constructed by students. This observation supports the hypothesis of the study.

2. Depending upon the findings (but also bearing in mind the limitations) of the research, it can well be maintained (but surely cannot be generalized unless supported by more comprehensive studies) that, without taking into account the broadcast cultures (dominant social and cultural discourses) of their societies, the broadcast education in both countries cannot do much for improving the professionalism in the field. The reason for this fact is not that training quality at the university broadcast departments is low but rather that broadcasting is essentially a culture-bound practice which has more to do with the meanings shared by specific national-cultural communities than with trans-cultural professional codes and rules.

So the ideal educational process for broadcasting would be one that furnishes the students with theoretical and analytical ability to critically comprehend, within the global context and in

relation to their prospective calling, the socio-cultural issues of their own countries. This argument entails that to improve the quality of broadcast education at universities, curricula and pedagogical activities should be organized primarily around and give primacy to social sciences and humanities rather than technicalities of the profession itself.

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Türkiye'de İletişim Eğitimi Üzerine Öneriler

Özet

İletişimin bir disiplin mi yoksa bir araştırma alanı mı olduğu konusunda tartışmalar devam etmektedir. İletişim'in bir disiplin olduğunu ileri süren yaklaşımlar bulursa da, iletişimi disiplinlerarası bir araştırma alanı olarak kabul etmek daha yerinde olacaktır. Bu varsayım göz önünde bulundurularak bu çalışmada iletişim eğitiminin klasik pedagoji yerine eleştirel pedagoji temelinde gerçekleştirilmesi önerilmektedir. Demokratik ve katılımcı bir süreç olan eleştirel pedagoji, eğitim süreleri boyunca iletişim öğrencilerine mezun olduktan sonra da sahip olacakları demokratik ve katılımcı değerler sağlayacağından, meslek yaşamlarında da hak ve sorumluluklarının bilincinde profesyoneller yetişmesi anlamına gelecektir.

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Suggestions on Communication Education in Turkey

Abstract

The question whether Communication is a discipline or a field of research is still subject to debate. Although there are certain approaches maintaining that Communication is a discipline, it would be more appropriate to consider Communication as an interdisciplinary field of research. Given this assumption, in this study it is suggested that Communication education should be carried out on the basis of a critical pedagogy instead of classical pedagogy. Being a democratic and participatory process, critical pedagogy would mean raising career professionals who are conscious of their rights and responsibilities since they would have been provided with democratic and participatory values during their education which would be kept after graduation.