

## FEMALE ACADEMICS IN DISTANCE EDUCATION FIELD

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Dear readers,

We give their opinions in the field of distance education in terms of women's point of view, their contribution to this field, and their opinions on the topic of "women education and distance education". We have our guest, a female academician of Anadolu University Open Education Faculty, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Coşgul YUKSEL.

### **My First Encounter with Distance Education**

The first thing I had heard about this field was "the Institute for Education through Television". The year was 1980. This institute was founded in Eskişehir... It was affiliated with the then-called Eskişehir Academy of Economics and Administrative Sciences. Having passed the job entrance exam of this institute, my fiancé was entitled to work there. Both of us had graduated from Ege University, Journalism and Public Relations College, Department of Radio and Television.

While the Institute for Education through Television was being staffed, in the meantime the test filming was done and the programmes were being prepared. Research was being conducted into the use of means of mass communication in education throughout the 1970s. Meanwhile national and international meetings were being held. New publication and broadcasting was being made. Projects oriented towards the practical application of distance education were being prepared. Furthermore, technological infrastructure was built thanks to foreign funds, and staff recruitment was maintained in order to train technical human force to use this technology. The foundations of the institution, later named Open Education Faculty, to carry out the first practices of distance education in Turkey, were thus laid. The task of offering distance education at higher education level was assigned to universities in 1981. The institution to undertake this task in 1982 was to be Anadolu University, founded on 20 July 1982.

It was 1985 when I started to work for the Institution for Education through Television, later named Educational Television (ETV), of Anadolu University Open Education Faculty,

which set out with such knowledge and experience in 1982. That was a period when there was intense work for Education Associate Degree project, developed for high school graduate teachers to have associate degree of 2 years. That was the first time the radio was to be used in education, and radio programmes were to be prepared for the target group. Having completed the first year as a programme production assistant, I continued in this unit as a programming assistant. Then a project for bachelor's degree completion program followed. I was working as an assistant director on educational television when Turkish and Maths programmes began to be produced for the target group preparing for the university exam.

Those were the times when I was writing a thesis for my master's degree in Film and Television Programme, which the Institute of Social Sciences offered. My thesis topic was based on opinions of the target group about the radio programmes which we had prepared.

1992 was the year when the Department of Scriptwriting was set up for the purpose of overcoming the problems in the scripts written by the teaching staff. I was one of those assigned in this department. Since then my work as an educational scriptwriter has been continuing in this institution. So has my interest in documentary cinema...

### Documentary Cinema and Me

My first encounter with documentary cinema came when I started to write a script for Nazmi's (Ulutak) documentary film "*Baş Makinist*" (Chief Mechanic). I was being introduced to a new understanding of documentary cinema which didn't overlap with what I had slightly known about it till then. This interest was one of the reasons why I did Proficiency in Art Degree in Film and Television Programme. I enrolled in Film and Television Programme in the Institute of Fine Arts at Marmara University in 1998. I completed the Proficiency in Art Programme with my thesis paper "*Yaylaçalı Beklemede (Yangın Kulesi)*" (Yaylaçalı On Standby – Fire Lookout Tower) in 2000. However, documentary cinema was going to be a subject which I kept interesting myself in forever.



In 2000, I watched a documentary about village institutes, about which I had just picked up some pieces of common knowledge till then. It was a documentary made by Can Dündar. There arose a question in Gülfem's (Gürses) and my minds: What do village institutes mean to women? We set out to research into this question. At that stage did we meet my dearest Pakize Türkoğlu, the author of the book titled "*Tonguç ve Enstitüleri*" (Tonguç and His Institutes). First, I gave Teacher Pakize a ring... She was a bit worried when she answered my call... After I told her about our village institute project on women, she got excited. I

shared the title of the film with Teacher Pakize on that telephone conversation. It was going to be *"Mandolinli Kız"* (Girl with Mandolin). And so it was. We completed the project in 2004. As we met the graduate teachers, each of whom had a distinguishing success story, we were to see what could be achieved in this country. For instance, having finished the primary school, Pakize Türkoğlu came to Aksu Village Institute from a mountain village of Alanya with the support of his father, who said, with obstinate refusal to old wives' tale that educated girls would burn in hell, that they wouldn't, either. Ayşe Baysal was a girl, who was sent to the institute because she was thin, feeble and couldn't work in the field.



She was coming to Ivriz Village Institute from a mountain village of Konya Ermenek. She witnessed how the older institute students coming to assistance from village institutes of different cities worked in the building construction. Accompanied by a family moving from Erzurum to Kars, Halise Apaydın arrived at Cilavuz to study at the Village Institute. In the years to come, Pakize, Halise and so on were going to meet at Hasanoğlu Higher Village Institute, to be the university of the institutes in the future. However, the story of village institutes in our country were to be completed with their closure in 1956.

For my part, I have continued both writing educational scripts for television and shooting documentaries. The documentaries such as *"Öte yüz"* (the Other Side), *"Bu Millet Bunları Gördü Kızım"* (This People Has Faced These, Daughter) were to come out in this process. My portfolio, I prepared with my articles on educational scripts and documentary cinema, was to enable me to be an associate professor in visual arts.

### Distance Education as a Student

The year was 2011 when my way overlapped with distance education as a student. Whenever I encountered a problem while either writing educational script or working on a documentary, I always found the solution in a dictionary of philosophy. Life was based on a philosophical foundation whether we were actually aware or not. However, when we were aware of this fact, life would be more meaningful. Such thoughts led me to use the opportunity of second university that Open Education Faculty offered. I enrolled in bachelor's programme in Philosophy.

Coursebooks from educational environments became basic course materials for me. Especially the books, prepared in accordance with distance education techniques after having been written by leading names of the Turkish academic life, were very important. As a student, did I benefit from the video programmes, the production of which I had contributed to for years? Yes. Especially the video programme about "Symbolic Logic", in

which the field expert explained the basic points on the board, helped me overcome this challenging course.

### **Future Plans**

Educational videos are still being prepared in ETV, established as the Institute for Education through Television. The huge TV studios of the past are much smaller now. Presenter films shot in a corner of the studio are converted into video programmes in computer environment. The shooting team of several people are smaller, so are the studios. At this point the issue which has maintained its importance from past to present is content design... I think I will keep on my work related to the content design in distance education.

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