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University Doesn't Die yet: A Perspective from Gorontalo State University (UNG) Towards the Social Welfare in Gorontalo

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Abstract. In the *Dark Academia: How University Die*, Peter Fleming responses the current condition of university is already destructed by the impact of the bureaucratic and neoliberal structures of academia in which, has turned universities into a toxic place. He argues that university nowadays has loss its intellectual environment promised as guardian of reasons, philosophical openness and preserving pure inquiry of the public. Though Fleming is right in some cases but this argument cannot be taken for granted as well as generalized as the pin-point conclusion due to the lack of representations against universities which still hold their commitment to bring changes in the society. This paper argues that university does not die yet by exploring the role of Gorontalo State University as a key institution in providing services in societies and assisting public policies relating to the social and economical problems faced by the government. This research is based on the empirical studies with qualitative method during three-year of UNG's involvement (2019-2021) toward the social welfare in Gorontalo. It is intended to see how the university, though facing many challenges both internal and external, but always keeping its eyes on the table to address challenges in the society.

Keywords: dark academia, neoliberal university, humanity

INTRODUCTION

"The new game for university just begun" is powerful words spoken by Hans N. Weiler, the first Rector of the Viadrina European University in Frankfurt [1]. These words are described as a process of how university, as a public sector that was modernly invented 200 years ago, faced great challenges with the advent of globalization. The primary characteristic of globalization is neoliberal system, in which, built in worldwide capitalist system in character [2]. It results a full range of forces that sweep barriers within institution across the globe. However, Weiler argues that the game has its side-effect: despite could easily make university get in touch with very important of public sectors but also deregulated in the same time. It becomes deregulated because neoliberalism makes public colleges and universities emphasize to support corporate culture that is based on knowledge-based economy [3]. It is compulsory for universities to address the problem of economic due to its relation to the social-welfare. In this sense, university has roles in training advanced students for professional positions both in technology and social issues in order to be prepared as workers who will fit into workplaces.

However, things are not easily done since the capitalist system is also responsible for the emergence of capitalist enterprises within the circle of university elites. It even marks a crisis, making university operates under the hand of academic capitalism which see that students as revenue and products. In broader spectrum, academic capitalism is also taking responsible for being so close to the state which then diminishes their criticism and turns out its philosophical aims as a centre of inquiry, research, teaching and publishing, challenging elite powers to be in cooperation with them. In Indonesia for example, there are several universities confirmed the Indonesia's Omnibus Law Number 11 Year 2020 on Job Creation, such as Gadjah Mada University, University of Indonesia and Airlangga University. The reason lie behind this is to encourage the creation of new jobs, especially in the labor-intensive sectors since the unemployment rate in Indonesia has boomed in the recent years due to the pandemic Covid-19 [4]. However, the very first question regarding to this is "to whom the policy is benefit?" do they only for elites or for public? On the other hand, there are abundance of procedural flaws during the process of making the law, such as ignoring public participations, legalized in a hurry, contrasted the Indonesian Constitution UUD 1945 and more importantly, it is potentially devastating the environment and taking over the rights of local communities when the law is implemented [5].

Fleming argues that the relationship between the academia and the state within this framework has turned out university as toxic workplaces [6]. The "dark academia" is a term he coined to those intellectuals who eventually die because experienced oppression within the the doctrines of New Public Management, Human Capital Theory and Public Choice Theory in which have contributed to the death of universities' aims and turned them out into self-interested, utility-maximising, and economic beings [7]. In this sense, Fleming concerned to the power of administration which then excludes intellectual functions in the society from, quoting Edward Said, "speak the truth of power" to people who are merely busy spending their times to reach out H-index scores, journal rankings, impact factors and grand income totals [8]. This condition eventually creates power imbalance: whereas academia should become source of criticism and defend public reasons from the discourse of power-relation, it eventually turns out into competition that probably put their time into a pointless meetings and endless emails. Therefore, within the framework of neoliberal climate, university has turned out into a toxic place.

It is true that Fleming's idea has made us clearly seen how university nowadays. However, his views cannot be taken for granted or universally argued. It is true that, especially in Indonesia, university is much more focusing on competitions for rankings. Yet this argument tends to simplify universities that is still surviving to maintain their aims to defend public reasons and contributing to the social-welfare through their involvement with the state. This paper brings out Gorontalo State University as one of examples how university, though must appropriate itself in a severe condition, but keep being in charge to contribute to the humanity through assisting the government during the Covid-19 pandemic.

DISCUSSION

The Neoliberal University: The Emergence of the "Dark Academia"

The term neoliberal university would not emerge without the globalization. It comes when social, political, economical, and institutional barriers have broken due to the certain developing interconnections of people, nations,

regions and insitution throughout the world. The term itself firstly is suggested to emerge in fifteenth century due to the European urbanization yet globally recognized not untill 1970s in America [9]. Milto Friedman, who coined the term, precisely wants neoliberalism necessitate freedom as its fundamental characteristic. He even wants freedom of economic as the key principle to get political freedom. In this sense, therefore, neoliberal brings out the idea of developing econic and social policies towards these interconnections, especially to represent those who are excluded from directly to participate in markets on a fair and equal basis.

However, the needs to equalize rights for all people still needed to be questioned since neoliberal can also be fluid. It is identified to a competition, privatization, deregulation, destabilisation even casualisation of the work force and reduced public spending [10]. In this stance, One of them, for instance, depicted in the university which has radically transformed; imbued with managerial and neoliberal discourse that diminish its rationalities and practices. In the United States, the academic world, since the emergence of neoliberalism, is firmly nested within the higher education industry: a lush, middle-class/affluent and extremely competitive academic market. Unfortunately, they are not addressed to answer the very crisis of humankind but only to reach out the university ranks. In Indonesia for example, there are many competitive standards, such as H-Index and journal rankings that should be accomplished. university can be well-known.

Though neoliberalism brings out the idea of freedom in its conceptual framework but the fact is that it is far from cry. Contrastingly, neoliberalism in university only creates the anti-intellectualism even politics of academia for the sake of groups who have power. In this sense, Fleming argues that neoliberal university has created "dark academia", the term referring to the bureaucratisation of university which particularly damaged the ethos of academia; from those who are responsible to produce public knowledge and societal progress to be servants on administrative inquiries [11]. These changes constitute the academic capitalism within universities that necessitate them to invest in business ventures. Such enterprise, whereas should be addressed to answer the very fundamental problems exist in the society such as environmental problems, rights, and inclusive policies, but unfortunately, going on to fulfill the economic revenue even have done it with elites outside the university.

Within its internal occasion, the problem coped with by university nowadays is that there is a shifting paradigm, especially to its perception toward the students: from the "real student" who should be able to develop their criticism to be customers. Potential students are highly determined the university prestige though they should be exploited: becoming less participated in public discussions even banned due to their criticism. Another example is the proportion of faculty working part-time increased from 24 per cent to more than 40 per cent and the percentage of those working full time but off the tenure track rose from about 10 per cent to 15 per cent [12]. What contributes to this radical changes, Fleming argues that because university administrators have, for various political and financial reasons that largely glosses over, systemically adopted the doctrines of New Public Management, Human Capital Theory and Public Choice Theory [13]. Under these theories, university has been in touched into corporate accountability measusres, making them insisted to the "key performance indicators" or metrics designed to capture grant total income, even if it should becoming hyper-competitive, backstabbing, and publication-chasing careerist.

How University should be?

Recent debates about the neoliberal university is focusing on how it defends its aim in the midst of academic capitalism. However, the very fundamental idea on this claim is sometimes vague and dilemmatic. On the one hand, it realizes that university has aims to be a place where thought are circulated, discourses are generated and source of criticism" but it needs to realizes the nowadays condition has been placed university within the nexus of corporate-based knowledge due to the impact of neoliberalism [14]. The reason to go back is not a choice since the world is getting to develop further, necessitating university to grow contextually if does not want to die; yet it is also very hard to imagine how university can always defend its aim within this unstable world. Thus, the answer is only one: university should only always engaged in every single condition by reinterpreting its aim. In 1810, Wilhem von Humboldt wrote a memorandum that led to the creation of the university of Berlin: unity of research and teaching and freedom of teaching and academic self-governance [15]. The first one is a fundamental presupposition made research and teaching should be critically conducted; while secondly, emphasizing to the freedom of thought, rationalism based on convictions and divorced from the distortions of government control.

In short, Humboldt wanted to argue that university must be separated from the chain of government so it can be neutral and keep cirritical toward every single of the governmental policies. This might be expected since neoliberalism, though it might bring "the dark academia" out, but with its characteristic of freedom still enables

university to be independent in choosing its position in the nexus of power. Here, the question of “how university should be?” thus, has to critically single out the interpretation of its aim (teaching, researching and contributing to the well-being of society) to this fragile world. What makes university be “university”, philosophically speaking, is located to its aim for humanity. It is true that science with its driven-policy-based on the economic enhanced has contributed to for the sake of human-kind. However, things evoked by science is reluctant to biases: science has resulted to the death of humanity during the Cold War II by destroying concentrated camps in Auschwitz and Treblinka; Nuclear War in 1945; even ethnic cleansing in Bosnia and Croatia in 1992-95.

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These facts, thus, are a need for science to be based on humanity and more importantly, this is an answer for a why university should be: science based on humanity. In praxis, this argument would permeate in consequential manner to be critical toward teachings, researches and contributions to the development of humanity—because at all, it is the only reason university exist. In the level of teachings for example, university should realize that students are subject who have agency, thought, and reflections; rather than object that prior to exploitations. Research should also be seen as a way to explicate truth of power and bringing it closer to the well-being of the society. And the last, university should be independent and doing its work for the sake of humanity by critical in examining governmental policies. Looking to be more specific to the existence of academia, they cannot be always on the “ivory tower”. Intellectual should be independent because they are only figures who can speak about the truth of powers. These three principles are fundamental for the university and more importantly, they are actually choices whether it can be done or exactly left behind door.

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Building and Innovating for Humanity: A Perspective from UNG

From this point of view, we analyze how university should be within the nexus of powers by bringing out Gorontalo State University (UNG) as an example. It is clear that avoiding neoliberal discourse on university is hard. However, it is also a need for UNG itself to keep contributing to the development of humanity, even in a small-scale of territory of Gorontalo. Building and Innovating for Humanity becomes the very fundamental philosophy of UNG nowadays. It seeks to explicate that the existence of university is to make sure that every single policies are addressed to strengthen the society based on human value. It is important to stretch out that this adagium is not merely a slogan but a commitment of UNG to the development of humanity in Gorontalo. During the severe year experiencing pandemic Covid-19 in Gorontalo since 2020, UNG, through Covid-19 Crisis Centre had contributed to the handling of the pandemic by publishing academic reports, assisting the government policies relating to the Covid-19 counter-measurement, even strengthening the village from its massive spread through “Program Desa Inovasi” [15].

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The academic reports were in charge of how the government should act during pandemic, especially relating to its counter-measurement. These reports are written in three times, especially when Gorontalo was in the red zone status due to the high rate of the spread of the pandemic. At the time, the government had considered to implement Large-Scale Social Restriction (PSBB) for three times during May to June, 2020. In this sense, UNG had gathered epidemiology, social, political and religious scholars, to assist how the PSBB should run in praxis. It was perceived that pandemic is not only a healthcare problem but also a political, social, even a religious problem at all. In assisting such policies, UNG even made a special team to map out how how Gorontalo community responded to the emergence of pandemic by regulating policies based on the socio-anthropological inquiries [17]. As a result, it was mainly known that what makes Gorontaloese broke the health protocol is not only because the problems within the policy itself but also the cultural patterns that are necessitating the community to be always engaged in everyday situations [18].

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In responding to that, thus, there was no choice except assisting the counter-measurement in the village level. In this stance, the Covid-19 Crisis Centre UNG, recommended the government to give authoritative power to the traditional figures—despite the local government, such as villagehead—in order to speak up about the danger of Covid-19. These figures are important since they have been listened due to their knowledge and contributions to the indigenous people. Moreover, UNG also established three Innovative Village: in Tumba and Pohuwato. This type of assistance was based on the governmental policy relating to the village implementation supported by Kementrian Desa and Kemenristek Brin. Needless to say, this policy even expanded to the commitment of establishing peace and promoting tolerance through the programme of Desa Pancasila and Forum Pemuda Cinta Desa (FORPEACE). The results have been so fascinating: despite the villages are compatible to cope with the pandemic, in other senses, they are also contributing to the broader discourse of tolerance and peace based on Pancasila as its philosophical basis.

CONCLUSION

In a nutshell, though university nowadays are in the nexus of powers due to the development of neoliberal climate, it can still be able to be independent because neoliberal climate itself, on its philosophical aim, based on the freedom of thought. Within this framework, it is only the university can map out and being independent toward its fate without ever delinked with the government. Contrastingly, by only contributing with the state, university can bring its thought to address broader problems within the society. Bringing out the case of Gorontalo State University, it can be concluded that university cannot be viewed generally as a toxic place but also can be critical one just if the university could extract its ideas to answer problems for the sake of humanity.

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