

## ON THE RELATION BETWEEN THE VILLAGE INSTITUTES AND INNOVATION IN THE TURKISH EDUCATION SYSTEM\*

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### ABSTRACT

*The Village Institutes were originally-designed educational institutions having been the product of thoroughly native considerations and foresights; and punched their values not only in the Turkish, but also in the world education history. Although they were closed down by some reactionary circles and forces, the impacts, power and pedagogic riches had reached until today. The main reason for that could be defined as that these institutions brought up an educational model which really provided innovations with a revolutionary style in the not only village field but also in every educational level and field. Thus, the main problem of this work is firstly to try to put forward how innovative the village institutes are in the field of education; secondly to analyze and comment on the main educational concepts, models and systems of the innovated situation of the Village Institutes which had developed in the context of their unique, modern, humanist and secular educational methods.*

**Keywords:** Village Institutes, Education, Innovation, Uniqueness, Improvement, Enlightenment.

### ÖZET

#### TÜRK EĞİTİM SİSTEMİNDE KÖY ENSTİTÜLERİ VE YENİLİK İLİŞKİSİ ÜZERİNE

*Köy Enstitüleri, sadece Türkiye değil, dünya eğitim tarihine de damgasını vurmuş, tamamen yerli düşünüş ve öngörünün ürünü orijinal eğitim kurumları idi. Her ne kadar bazı gerici çevre ve güçler tarafından kapatılmış olsalar da, Köy Enstitüleri'nin etki, güç ve eğitsel zenginlikleri günümüze kadar ulaşmıştır. Bunun temel sebebi, bu kurumların, bünyelerindeki eğitim sisteminde esas olarak araştırmacılık, yaratıcılık ve üreticilik işlevleri benimsemelerinin yanında, sadece köy alanında değil, gerçekte her tür ve seviyedeki eğitim alanında devrimci bir çığırla gerçekten yenilik sağlayan bir eğitim modelini getirmeleridir. Dolayısıyla bu çalışmanın ana sorunsalı, Köy Enstitüleri'nin eğitim anlamında ne denli yenilikçi olduklarını ortaya koymaya çalışmak ve Enstitülerin özgün, çağdaş, hümanist ve laik eğitim yöntemleri bağlamında*

\* This essay has been reviewed and developed from the verbal presentation titled as "Köy Enstitüleri ve Yenilik İlişkisi Üzerine Bir Analiz [An Analysis on the Relation Regarding the Village Institutes and Innovation]" presented by the author on 08 June 2015 in the II. International Eurasian Educational Research Congress (08-10 June 2015) at the Hacettepe University/Ankara.

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YDÜ Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi, C. IX, No. 2, (Ekim 2016)

*gelişen yenilikçi eğitim ortamının temel eğitsel olgu ve kavramlarını analiz etmek, yorumlamak ve anlamlandırmaktır.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Köy Enstitüleri, Eğitim, Yenilik, Özgünlük, Gelişme, Aydınlanma.

*“Young Instructor... At your home, at your school, at your workshop, at your garden, keep yourself working all the time. Stay away from places where shelter lazy and unoccupied. Those seeking you during working hours should find you always on your duty. Arrange everything in this line. Hug your work like a worshipper. A day shall come and those who gained knowledge from you would idolatrously grasp their work just like you.”*

İsmail Hakkı Tonguç<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

Education is a concept which primarily aims at training well-behaved and honest citizens and embracing them with basic knowledge and skills they could need in the social and economical life. However, more importantly, education desperately tries to keep up a society, healthy from every aspect and clear from every sort of violence. Education helps individuals explore their own potentials and creative powers and thus ensures their humanely development. In this respect, it is likely to say that education for individual functions as a social factor which enables to increase his/her accords and sensitivity to both his/her society and the whole world.

Education in this sense played a very important role in the last 300 years of the Ottoman-Turkish social history. It is due to the fact that the Ottoman-Turkish educational system between 18th and 20th centuries which increasingly kept up raising with paralel to her modernization reached as a final point to the Turkish Republic in the name of socio-politic secularism. This point could be placed as a culmination in realizing a contemporary and modern Turkish society. In this frame, education began to play a major role in the young Republic after 1923 in the route to reaching up to the level of contemporary civilizations. Because the founders of the young Republic harshly adopted an educational system which mainly aimed at raising up individuals who thoroughly considered the “Republican philosophy” and its basic values, particularly the principle of being a democratic, secular and social

<sup>1</sup> “Genç öğretmen... Evinde, okulunda, işliğinde, bahçende hep işbaşında bulun. Tembeller, işsizlere yuva olan yerlerden kaç. Seni her arayan iş zamanında daima görevinin başında bulmalı. Her şeyi buna göre ayarla. İşine taparcasına bağlan. Gün gelecek senin elinde yoğrulanlar da tıpkı senin gibi işe taparcasına sarılacaktır.”

law-enforced state, assimilated life-style stemming from a modernist and secularist mentality. Thus, the individuals of the young Republic would be creative, productive, well-behaved and virtuous (Gül, 2011: 283-288).

The success of a school curriculum, whatever the intention is, depends mostly on the teacher, who is the key person in enacting it. Having this awareness, the debate about teacher education in Turkey had an important place among the other educational concerns in the history of Turkish education. Starting from the beginning of the last century, there have been many efforts to improve teacher education. These efforts are aimed not only at improving educational practice but also at addressing some of the serious problems in the educational system. These problems include mainly; lack of teachers for the rapidly growing population; irrelevancy of teacher education to the realities of Turkish schools; the need for a theoretical base for teacher education (what and how to teach pre-service teachers, how to select them, etc.) (Çakiroğlu and Çakiroğlu, 2003: 254). Thus, our aim in this paper is to discuss the problems of the relation between the Village Institutes and innovation in the educational system of the modern Turkey, and also to elaborate on the issues in this relation debate that we think are innovative. This paper, in part, is an attempt to shed light on this problematic. Moreover, through the analysis of the Village Institutes experience, the paper also aims to contribute to a better understanding of the social, political and intellectual climate in Turkey from about the mid-1920s to the mid-1940s.

### **The Content, Aim and Methodology of the Study Including a Comparative Analysis Regarding Current Literature and Debates on the Village Institutes**

During times of transformation, education is given a critical role in shaping the new society. Likewise, in Turkey, much importance was attributed to education after the establishment of the Republic. During this period of transformation from a traditional-Islamic society into a modern “Westernised” one, a number of social, economic, political and cultural reforms took place which rendered education an indispensable change agent. Thus, in the history of Turkish education, two of the significant attempts at reforms involved schools were defined as “Institutes”. Those are the “Girls’ Institutes” and the “Village Institutes”. However, these both no longer exist (Gök, 2007: 93). This essay deals with the latter of them, Village Institutes, established in the late 1930s during the formative years of the Turkish Republic.

The Village Institutes comprised originally-designed educational considerations and foresights. These have been the product of completely-native

envisions and approaches. Therefore they punched their values not only in the Turkish, but also in the world education history. In this frame, it is important to emphasize that their pedagogic contributions and impacts had reached so far, that is to say, until current times. The main reason for that could be defined in the sense of their unique -thus innovative- education model which robustly provided new talent, understanding and progress with a revolutionary style in both the village and village-related educational fields. Thus:

- (1) The main content of this essay comprises the Village Institutes, their short history, the innovative aspects stemming from their unique educational system and model and in this frame, a detailed and comparative literature research.
- (2) The main aim of this study is to make considerations and comments on the contributions of the Village Institutes model to the Turkish education system and explore how innovative they were regarding the field of educational progress.
- (3) As scientific research methodology to be used in this study, content analysis and hermeneutics methods will be accepted to pursue.

These research goals and methods will mainly be achieved by making researches and analysis over the educational system and concepts of the Village Institutes. In this way, we will try to put forward the innovated system of the Village Institutes by emphasizing the context of their unique and contemporary educational model. So in this essay, a brief historical background will first be provided; and then, based on the parameters realized the establishment and finalization of these Institutes, an attempt will be made to describe the significance of the educational, qualified and innovative spirits and visions of these Institutes. This kind of an analysis approach will enable us in understanding of the formation of a new educational reform and progress targeting primarily the rural parts of Turkey in the late 1930s.

Having had research activities on the current literature and debates concerning the Village Institutes and new methodologic approaches in learning and teaching, it will be likely to achieve some comparative approaches in order to put forward in which aspects this study is differentiated from them and thus, how this research aims at contributing to the literature in this manner.

In this line, among some recent valuable studies in the field of Village Institutes' literature, it is seen that one of them focuses on the aim to set forth the

establishment environment and functioning of the Village Institutes and discuss their practicability<sup>2</sup> or mainly to explore the creativity as a methodology in social sciences teaching and learning.<sup>3</sup> One other study focuses on the aims at examining the physical activities in daily life routine of one single Institute (Çifteler) as well as the content and objectives of the cultural courses adopted in their curriculum.<sup>4</sup> Another study focus on the Village Institutes by recounting that they are elaborated since they hold a significant place in the Turkish education system by comparing them and their curriculum by shortly emphasizing the results they provided.<sup>5</sup> Another study also focused mainly and solely on art education in the Institutes.<sup>6</sup> Another study embraces its research target by narrowing the aim at exploring the understanding of pedagogy which was put into practice in the Village Institutes as an example of liberatory education, associating it with the critical pedagogy.<sup>7</sup>

However it is observed during the current literature survey that the methodologies in the studies we put forward refrained from focusing on the detailed creativity of the Village Institutes as being unique case examples. Thus we tried to focus on this research about the Village Institutes by emphasizing their uniqueness with two main pillars which act as diversifications from the former current studies we attracted attention above. Firstly, their innovative aspects and impacts to the Turkish education system at that time will be discussed as detailed as possible in line with the spirit and vision of education, quality and innovation in the Institutes. Secondly, our aim to discuss the availability of realizing Village Institutes from today's perspective by putting forward their future-possible innovative contributions to the Turkish education system will likely enable another disparity in that sense.

Additionally, it is significant to call attention on the fact that the data related to Village Institutes in this study has been gathered by an extensively wide literature survey which was considered in this manner as enriching the study positively.

### **A Brief Historical Background: Road towards the Village Institutes**

After the foundation of the Republic in 1923, Turkey selected a direction that aimed to allow her to take place among the 'developed' nations of the world. To

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<sup>2</sup> For example, see in detail, (Kucuktamer and Uzunboyly, 2015: 392-399).

<sup>3</sup> For example, see in detail, (Ege, 2013: 2-12).

<sup>4</sup> For example, see in detail, (Çelik and Bayrak, 2010: 19-32).

<sup>5</sup> For example, see in detail, (Kıral, 2015: 45-52).

<sup>6</sup> For example, see in detail, (Elpe, 2014: 15-34).

<sup>7</sup> For example, see in detail, (Aytemur Sağıroğlu, 2013: 81-99).

achieve this aim, several reforms and innovations started to take place in the early years of the Republic. Innovations in the field of education were among the most important reforms of the 1920s. The aim of secularising Turkey and modernising the social and economic structure of the country could only be pursued on the condition that the educational level of the population be raised significantly. Atatürk, founder of the Turkish Republic and initiator of the reforms, perceived teachers as leaders and one of the key elements of the new movement (Çakiroğlu and Çakiroğlu, 2003: 255).

Thus, the elites of the early Republican Era undertook some significant educational reforms following 1923. All of those reforms targetted at educating a wide variety of Turkish folks masses who were ceded from Ottoman regime and mostly illiterate, poor, pressed and exploited by centuries. The target was to educate them with scientific methods and make them self-confident and rationalist in line with the principles and basis adopted by the modernist Republic. This initiatives undertaken had been realized particularly via ambitions and contributions of those “pioneer” Ministers of Education of the young Republic such as Mustafa Necati, Reşit Galip, Saffet Arıkan, Hasan-Âli Yücel who robustly believed in reformist and laicist education. In this sense, it is likely to claim that the core of those reformist educational undertakings of the early Republican era had based on the Republican philosophy, modernist societal formation, universal humanist values, sovereignty of the mind and science, secular mentality and individual liberation.

Among those premise and modernist education initiatives yet undertaken by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk during the Salvation War of Turkey could be highlighted the first Advisory Council of National Education in July 1921, Law about the Unification of Education in March 3, 1924, Meetings of Science of the years 1923, 1924 and 1926, the Nation Schools [Millet Mektepleri] established firstly in November 1928, establishment of the Turkish Historical Society in April 1931, opening of the People’s Houses in February 1932, establishment of the Turkish Linguistic Association in July 1932, opening of the İstanbul University in August 1933, opening of the Faculty of History, Linguistic and Geography in Ankara in 1935 and last but not the least, formation of the Village Instructor Courses in 1936 which would be the basis of the Village Institutes in the future. Thus, disclosing of these undertakings in the road to the establishment of the Village Institutes are particularly important in emphasizing the policy, understanding and mentality of the statesmen’s regarding the education in the years 1920s. In this frame, it is likely to evaluate these reformist educational initiatives as the efforts to establish a modern individual and thus society who adopted the Republican revolutions with a thorough national awareness and talent. They could also be considered as radical education endeavours in the path to form a modern

culture whose national, democratic and populist properties outweigh primarily by reaching to the intellectual, scientific and secular roots of the contemporary civilization in general meaning (Ertop, 1998: 2-3; Kışlalı, 1998: 37).

In 1926, two types of teacher education schools, both of which were mainly secondary schools, were designed to meet the different demands of the regions: (i) primary teacher schools for urban areas; and (ii) village teacher schools for rural areas. In the first half of the century, great differences between the needs of the rural and urban parts of the country led to different approaches to teacher education programmes for rural and urban areas. There was more interest in improving the educational level of average people in rural Anatolia. The purpose of village teacher schools was to educate teachers for villages where people's educational needs are completely different from those of urban regions. The best known of these attempts was the 'Village Institutes' [Köy Enstitüleri] in the 1940s.<sup>8</sup> These institutes have a very important and unique place in the Turkish history of education because they were based on the practical needs of the village people and strong theoretical works of Ismail Hakki Baltacıoğlu, who developed his theory of 'social school' (Baltacıoğlu, 1942). Village Institutes were also based on the principles of democracy, community collaboration and problem solving in real-life situations.<sup>9</sup>

However, in order to realize the transformation of the villages and education in the villages in the modern Turkey that it would be more appropriate to incite the roots of investigating solutions to eliminate the problematic of rural educational system deficiencies in the 1930s and 1940s.<sup>10</sup> In this context, it is significant to emphasize that the statecraft confronted with a crystal-clear fact at the end of the years 1930s. It was the fact that there were 4.500 villages with a teacher and 3.815 villages with an instructor out of nearly 40.000 villages of Turkey in 1938. Thus, by considering this really inadequate and poor education in towns and villages of the Republic in those years, another crystal-clear fact was arising as to increase educational improvement of the village straight away, and to undertake serious and

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<sup>8</sup> Officially, it began in 1940 although experimental studies started in 1937. The Institutes continued until the early 1950s, but the original phase of the Village Institutes ended in 1946 with the withdrawal of H. A. Yücel from the Ministry of Education and Ismail Hakki Tonguç from the administration of the Elementary Education (Karaomerlioglu, 1998: 47). For Fay Kirby, who wrote the most comprehensive history of the Institutes, the post-1946 practices actually achieved the opposite of the original intentions and targets. See for detail (Kirby, 1962: 6)

<sup>9</sup> For detail, see (Başgöz, 1995; Binbaşoğlu, 1995; Karagozoğlu, 1991: 26-29)

<sup>10</sup> For detail on this issue, see (Stirling, 1965, 1993; Kıray, 1968; Kandiyoti, 1975; Vergopoluos, 1978; Keyder, 1983; Akşit, 1993)

fundamental reforms about the education of village children as well. Thus, it was requisite to establish an urgent educational initiative aimed at village in the context of opening schools in a greater number of villages and assignments of more teacher or instructor in the villages. These sorts of necessities which paved the way in the establishment of the Village Institutes were significant in not only finalizing all of those educational initiatives successively but also improving the citizenship rights of the villagers who formed the majority of the population at that time. Therefore, those education initiatives orientated towards “village” would also become the lever of a new education project which could enable desirable participation of villagers in the social, economical and political life, as required. (Özman, 2009: 369).

In this meaning, it would maybe be appropriate to assume the “Education Project” of the Village Institutes as the most important enlightenment initiative in the last 1000-year history of the Turkish society. In this way, Renaissance of the West could be realized for the Anatolian people by opening the mentality in becoming self-confident and independent individuals as well as learning not to put religious references ever beneath the social norms. However, the incident never resulted in this way, i.e. positively... Various political and economical considerations outweigh in that negative ending. Thus, the main goals of the Institutes which were to educate village children as individuals adopting secular principles and reforms of the Republican Revolution, not bowing their heads in front of injustice, investigating the results of social incidents had been obstructed. Nevertheless, the project of the Village Institutes was an education model not only peculiar and unique to Turkey, but also never-copied totally from anywhere else. That project was mainly adopted to the social conditions and philosophy of the young Republic. Thus, the results that was aimed at reaching in this study are to put forward how unique, modern and improvionist the education model and methods in these Institutes were. And by making use of these analysis and evaluations, we will try to establish some considerations how far the model of the Village Institutes could be realized in today’s Turkey.

### **A Dualist Dilemma in the Fate of the Village Institutes: From a ‘Holy’ Establishment to a ‘Damned’ Finalization**

The Village Institutes embody an educational attempt made in the modern Turkey between 1937 and the mid-1940s to transform the Turkish peasants and countryside. There were actually many expectations from these Institutions for the development of rural Turkey in the the early Republican era. Some of them were to modernize the social relations, to bring an end to poverty and ignorance among the



peasants, to create peasant intellectuals, to increase agricultural productivity and to help enlargement of the Kemalist Revolution into the countryside. Though there was a consensus in the beginning among the ruling circles as to what should be the goals of the Institutes, the actual historical experience turned out to be extremely controversial. The Village Institutes became one of the major foci of political and ideological debate in Turkey, especially in the 1950s and the early 1960s. Most left-oriented Kemalists saw in the Village Institutes the embodiment of Kemalist populism at its highest point,<sup>11</sup> whereas many right-wing politicians and intellectuals condemned the Village Institutes and made them the scapegoats for their political ambitions and anti-communist hysteria (Karaomerlioglu, 1998: 48). Therefore, such a diversity of opinion exemplifies the need for further study in order to understand the Village Institutes.<sup>12</sup>

The 1940s were the World War II (1939-1945) years which particularly were full of with many social chaos, hardships and distress, not only around the world, but also in Turkey. Even though this was a real boredomfull situation in the world, the first half of the 1940s meant a different meaning for the Turkish Education History by having a bright and wishfull horizon shining with excitement due to the rise of the Village Institutes. As a matter of fact, the main brain-workers of this education initiative at the end of 1930s were İsmet İnönü who was the second President of the Republic; Hasan-Âli Yücel who was appointed as the Minister of Education in 1939 and finally İsmail Hakkı Tonguç, his diligent and idealist Director of Elementary School Section in the Ministry. Just as stated by Mediha Esenel (Berkes) (1999: 249, 255) as; “*They were the future of this country!.. The biggest loss of our country had been the destruction of the Village Institutes.*”,<sup>13</sup> this improvionist man-power triangle made that brilliant idea true with the approvment of the Law regarding the establishment of the Village Institutes, No: 3803, in the Turkish National Grand Assembly in April 17, 1940. In the program of the Institutes based on the Law, main targets for the village children had been made definite such as (1) they should be equipped with the knowledge requisite for the villagers via practical, functional and applied training in the field instead of classical, unpractical and theoretical education; (2) in this way, they would become instructors for the villages who were trained with a multi-functionality educational understanding in the field. Thus, it is likely to emphasize that the Institutes, one of the most unique education models Turkey made

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<sup>11</sup> See for instance (Baydar, 1976: 19-20; Tonguç, 1970: 33)

<sup>12</sup> See for instance (Tahir, 1967; Vexliard and Aytaç, 1964: 41-47; Szyliowicz, 1969: 150-166; Stone, 1967: 36-55, 1974: 419-429; Yılmaz, 1977: 72-80)

<sup>13</sup> “*Onlar bu ülkenin geleceği idi!... Ülkemizin en büyük kaybı köy enstitülerinin yıkılması olmuştur.*”

available for the world education history, left their mark upon the Republican education history as well (Tekeli, 1983: 666).

However, these training institutions were worn out by some official and civilian circles with exhausting hearsays and rumours to blacken them. Those slanders which were totally meaningless, absurd and groundless had extended from the Institutes' tempting communism and making "reddish" propaganda to their provoking immorality and indecency among students via intimate teenager relations. Under these circumstances, the endurance of the Institutes against those sorts of indulgence and counter-propaganda lost power and this unberable unfair attacks over the Instutes finally reached to a point of changing their names as "Village Teacher Schools" [Köy Öğretmen Okulları] during the Ministry of Education of Reşat Şemsettin Sirer, and at the end, also these schools were closed down by Democrat Party [Demokrat Parti] in 1954. Even Yücel and Tonguç were blamed as being communists. Thus, by 1950, both these intellectuals were completely cleared away from both political life and educational realm of Turkey, and they both never got any duty in either the People's Republican Party [Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi] as well as any other political party's staff or educational bureaucracy of the State.

However, in the years when the Institutes were actively open to educate, unique training methods and models adopted there gained attraction of many Turkish intellectuals and encouraged them to investigate the Institutes. For instance, Mediha Esenel (Berkes) (1999: 254) who made research visits to some of the Institutes at various dates as a sociology assistant in the Faculty of History, Linguistic and Geography in Ankara, describes her views and feelings regarding the Institutes as;

"Hasan-Âli Yücel and İsmail Hakkı Tonguç had discovered a gold mine unprocessed in the Anatolian soil, so to say. Such an emotion and enthusiasm was not observed in this country since Atatürk's era. These children were cultivating the soil, at the same time making paintings, writing essays and being interested in music. They were enhancing their cultural level by reading books... Tonguç was telling to the students; "You kept your mouths shut for 600 years; do not be silent anymore; endeavour to talk, think deeply in every issue, bring up ideas and views". We were mostly scared of our teachers in the lycees; an parrot-fashion education model which was only dependent on the lesson book was to be followed. However, I was filling with admiration for the courage of the students in the Institutes. They were capable of bringing forward views which could improve their own education model. Above all, I remember that I was totally astonished when I saw them perform a play from Shakespeare."<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> "Sanki Hasan-Âli Yücel ve İsmail Hakkı Tonguç Anadolu'da işlenmemiş bir altın madeni bulmuşlardı. Atatürk'ten sonra böylesine bir coşku bu ülkede görülmemiştir. Bu çocuklar bir yandan doğayı

According to Alper Akçam (2009), as being the most unique example of the Anatolian Renaissance and enlightenment action that mainly started by the establishment of the Republic, it is likely to say that the successful functions of the Village Institutes made significant echoes and thus gained great interest. In this line, famous American pedagogue John Dewey emphasized as; “*The schools which engulf my imagination in the final years are being established in Turkey; these are the Village Institutes.*”;<sup>15</sup> in the same line, the well-known British historian Arnold Toynbee commented as; “*You had dig out a deep cliff between village and city. After visiting a few Village Institutes, I realized that this large cliff could be cleared away via the Village Institutes. The Institutes is a very skilful remedy discovered to fill the gap between the villager and the urban as well as the folks and the intellectuals.*”;<sup>16</sup> also Fredrik W. Fernau had commented as; “*The Village Institutes are an original and peculiar thought of the Kemalist Turkey.*”<sup>17</sup> (As cited in Altunya, 2002; Makal, 1997: 5-11, 190).

## **Dynamic Forces of Rural Change: Peasant Children and the Village Institutes**

### ***The Nature and Perceived Mission of the Village Institutes: A “Modern” Institution for Training Peasants***

The Village Institutes as being the most significant and leading institutions of the Republican Turkey’s history had always been creative and productive in education. These institutions were established particularly in the regions convenient for the applied agriculture in order to educate village teachers and vocational people from whom villages could mostly benefit. Thus, the teachers graduated from the Institutes had always been able to respond to every sort of needs of the villagers and contribute to their farming and agricultural improvement (Aydoğan, 1997).

Besides, the Institutes paved the way of education model as being a basis for

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*işliyor, öte yandan resimler yapıyor, kompozisyonlar yazıyor, müzikle ilgileniyorlardı. Kitaplar okuyarak kültürlerini artırıyorlardı... Tonguç, öğrencilere: “Altı yüz yıl sustunuz; artık susmayın, konuşun, her konuda derinlemesine düşünün, fikirler üretin” demiş. Bizler liselerde öğretmenlerimizden genellikle korkardık; kitaba bağımlı ezberci bir eğitim sistemi uygulanırdı. Bu çocukların cesaretine hayran kalıyordum. Onlar, kendi eğitim sistemlerini daha da geliştirecek fikirler ileri sürebiliyordu. Hele Shakespeare’den bir oyun oynadıklarını gördüğümde büsbütün şaşırđımı anımsıyorum.”*

<sup>15</sup> “*Son yıllarda hayalimdeki okullar Türkiye’de kurulmaktadır; bunlar Köy Enstitüleri’dir.*”

<sup>16</sup> “*Köy ile şehir arasına uçurum açmışsınız. Birkaç Köy Enstitüsü’nü ziyaret ettikten sonra anladım ki, bu uçurum Köy Enstitüleri ile düzeltilebilir. Enstitüler, köylü ile şehirli, halk ile aydın arasındaki uçurumu doldurmak için bulunmuş pek maharetli bir çaredir.*”

<sup>17</sup> “*Köy Enstitüleri, Kemalist Türkiye’nin kendine özgü ve özgün bir buluşudur.*”

the Anatolian Renaissance in the 20th century. One of their main targets had been to carry Turkish society to more modernist structural transformations and transitions in the fields of education, science, art, philosophy and literature (Bulut, 2010: 385). In this sense, the Institutes raised up teachers equipped with functions to able to keep the continuity of the Republican reforms;<sup>18</sup> but more importantly, a creative, productive and non-parrot-fashion education model were the key elements of the Village Institutes training system. Thus, it is appropriate to claim that the Village Institutes education model introduced a totally new and innovation-presenting system in the training to the Turkish education system. Because, behind the Village Institutes understanding robustly stood the mental wealth of the universal pedagogy as well as the great accumulation from the endeavours of the Republican education reforms. These universal resources are fed from the apprehension of the improvionist and enlightening as stated in Mustafa Kemal's saying; "...*ambition of raising up generations of free in their views, free in their beliefs*"<sup>19</sup> as well as reaching upto knowledge in contemporary education being as applicable and usable in training. As a matter of fact, the Republican education reforms envisaged the essential transformation of the folks solely by way of education as well as raising up the individual only for the high benefits of the society, not for the "cheap markets" of today's world. This sort of a consideration was the result of an improvionist and humanist philosophy. In this sense, the Village Institutes had become the bright and revitalization settings in the way to the realization of that philosophy. Now, the issue of how that has been accomplished in those settings will be analyzed.

In the basis of the Village Institutes' educational philosophy laid the understading of combining training and deed. Although İsmail Hakkı Tonguç made use of the views of some foreign pedagogues about the "unity of training and deed", in other words "learning while doing" system of a pedagogical innovation, he combined this training model with a very newly-innovative spirit and mentality in relation to those hard days' conditions of poor Turkey in the 1940s, and applied that awesome innovation of educational system in the Village Institutes very successfully (Kepenek, 2010: 51). "Learning by doing" depends on the principle of the combination and cooperation of thought and deed, notion and action, or in other

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<sup>18</sup> For instance, Turkish sociologist Niyazi Berkes (1965: 3) considered the "modernity" as language, thought and culture. In this sense, he claimed that the issue of religion was not a question of enlightenment of mind, but an issue of language, history and culture. According to him, this issue of religion could be surmounted solely by socio-cultural reforms whose continuity should be provided uninterruptedly. See for detail (Görgün Baran, 2012: 85)

<sup>19</sup> "*Fikri hür, vicdanı hür kuşaklar yetiştirme arzusu.*"

words, theory and practice. While it could be considered an easy work to unite theory and practice at first, it is crystal-clear that difficulties all around were quite gigantic both under the general conditions of the country and under the social circumstances of the village in those years. In short, what had been envisaged to be realized with the Institutes regarding villages whose fates could not change for centuries was to transform social and economical structure of those rural environments which constitute 80% population of the country in the 1940s. Realizing this however necessitated an innovative and unique effort. İsmail Hakkı Tonguç as being at the first row lays in this gigantic achievement of those idealists who established the idea of the Institutes. In other saying, their great accomplishment was embedded in that secrecy that they could thrivingly evaluate the necessity of the gigantic conversion in social structure and rural cultivation of the State and put into effect the process of productivity by learning and learning by production in the training system of the country.

Just as for Tonguç (1998), the Institutes were the educational settings which were to educate young people who were fully-adoptive to the Republican revolution, inoffensive, modest, calm, occupied with their own affairs, self-reliant, self-sufficient, abling self-criticism, self-administrative, able to look after and fend for themselves, teaching knowledge and information in -and via- the deed. In these institutions, the relationship of being for the -and in the- life itself as well as applying the principle of education for everyone in everywhere, all the time and life-long had been thrived very successively. So, these sorts of relations summarize the education model of the Village Institutes in a very best way. Thus, it will be appropriate to emphasize that this education model adopted in Turkey during the years of 1940s will give a best and paramount reflection over the training models in the general modern educational system of the 21st century.

Likewise, functionality attributed to the Village Institutes in the 1940s was an implemented function not only in making villagers literate, but also in peaking them at top to a structure embedded with new productivity, knowledge and technology. Thus, in the education model of the Institutes, searching for what the information was, questioning the accuracy of information and making information useful for the mankind had been among the paramount goals. It is therefore likely to see that the Institutes also functioned as research and application centers of their times. Can Yücel (akt. Kocabaş, 2010: 17) described these features as;

“There is a bravery of the Village Institutes which gives off a light for today and also enlightens our path. It represents: constructive-training, unity with nature! Harmony of nature and human body. Pestalozzi, that heroic Pestalozzi idea! The idea that the

life is a whole notion, and the Universe (not the Pasha) forms a entirety.”<sup>20</sup>

As clearly seen, the Village Institutes had been one of the most important pillars of “mobilization of being human” commenced with the Republican reforms. The main principle in the Institutes was to get trained during deed and vocation while experiencing, producing and thus transforming labour into work-piece. In this frame, the Institutes sustained their education implementations on their own soils self-reliantly and self-sufficiently. Working collectively had been paramount labour there while setting the brains and hands free had enabled the notion of accounting “the book” the same as “the bread”. Because, for all the girls and boys educating in the Institutes, it was an enthusiasm of dealing with a musical instrument, driving a bicycle or motorcycle, singing collectively, learning to play national folk dances, participating collectively in the various deeds of the life -piteous or joyfull- against all the facts of life and its cultural difficulties and sharing life together by refraining and safeguarding from all the mean, unsuitable, deceit, vulgar and petty manners.

### ***The Spirit and Vision of Education, Quality and Innovation in the Institutes.***

In the 1930s, the Village Institutes were established as an extension of means of village movement. The main target and aim for their establishment was to teach peasants modern agricultural techniques and take advantage of their contributions in revolutionary and agricultural developments of rural areas by sending them back to the(ir) villages. Given that 80% of the population lived in villages, it is crystal-clear why the education of the peasants and the development of agriculture was seen as one of the urgent needs at the time. Thus in order to realize that goal, the Village Institutes were established in the late 1930s, whose historical periods until 1954 was a distinctive era in the Turkish education history, and although the demographic features of Turkey, and its economy being shifted from agriculture to industry (including service industry) make the Village Institutes education model -somewhat-inapplicable in today’s socio-economic conditions, this unique experience is still largely focused upon through discussions over education (Kucuktamer and Uzunboylu, 2015: 392).

The creative and productive education in the Institutes were consistently two key pillars of their contemporary and scientific training methods. Thus, in the

<sup>20</sup> “Köy Enstitülerinin günümüze ışık tutan, önümüzü aydınlatan bir yiğitliği var. O da şu: Yapıcı Eğitim, Doğayla Birliktelik! İnsan Bedeniyle Doğanın Uyumu. Pestalozzi, o kahraman Pestalozzi fikri! Yaşamın bir bütün olduğu, Evren’in (Pasa değil) bir bütünsellik oluşturduğu fikri.”

Institutes which raised upon these main two pillars, it was due to this fact that “knowledge”, “estimation and conviction” and “habitual way of systematic and rationalist thinking” had formed the three sides of an unique education-triangle. The questions of “What”, “What for”, “How” as well as activities leading upto comprehensions such as “Comment!”, “Explain!” and “Apply!” could also be incorporated as other basic educational implementations in the Institutions. With this kind of a training model, the students of the Institutes enabled to raise their analytic and creative thinking abilities to the utmost level. Because an education model excluding estimation and conviction is a parrot-fashion and shape-wise education. Transformation of an ability or skill into a habitual and established exercise, equipping individual with unwilling manners which does not necessiate consideration and evaluation, and revitalize that unwilling manner with an outer urge are both the result and goal of the parrot-fashion education model (Bulut, 1988).

In this frame, it is likely to claim as well that parrot-fashion education feeds up anti-democratic and anti-laicist education style, and vice versa. Acknowledging to another, surrender of the wisdom, discipleship, blindly faithfulness, fish-memory, taking-the-easy-way-out and easily-becoming-rich are basic features of the parrot-fashion and anti-laicist education (Yıldırım, 1988). So, it is likely to emphasize the education model in the Institutes as totally secular due to the fact that their model compraised estimation and conviction features inspring the students in both questioning, seeking, exploring, verifying the accuracy of the information and exposing guiding, improving their mental skills in a factual manner. It is likewise observed in later years that most of the Institutes graduates, such as Fakir Baykurt, Ümit Kaftancıoğlu, Talip Apaydın, Mahmut Makal, Mehmet Başaran, Pakize Türkoğlu, Hatun Birsen Başaran, Ali Dündar, Mehmet Uslu and Dursun Akçam, realistically displayed these features and abilities in various intellectual deeds they had achieved so far.

It is clearly obvious that the education model of the Institutes was the main factor for the students to overstep various mental and physical abilities as compared to the others educating in the regular State schools of those years. For instance, in the Institutes, open air was mostly used as training and education implementations. While this was the fact of education in the Institutes 75 years ago, it is full of meaning to consider that the advantages and educational yield of open-air education were discovered and preferred only in the recent years in Turkey. However the education achieved freely in the open-air, as being a training model enabling interactions among ourselves, others and nature, will easily pave the way for the individual (1) to learn how to cope up with the difficulties encountered; (2) to enable

own and social improvement; (3) to develop the thorough relations with the nature (Kocabaş, 2010: 452).

Likewise, training lessons not only on culture, agriculture and construction, but also training on health issues had covered a great variety extend in the curriculum of the Institutes. Candidates of the health section increased their vocational skills with practical lessons and implementations in not only the Institutes, but also the nearby hospitals. In the Institutes, infirmaries had essentially been a very convenient places for their practical lessons. The most significant innovation the Village Institutes would create in the field of health was “regional dispensary” system. In line with this system, a 60-bed dispensary was built by the students in the Hasanoğlan High Village Institute (Güvercin vd., 2010: 157; Altunya, 2002).

Art of theatre in the Institutes had been another important and oftenly-adopted artistic activity which accomplished collectively, and thus improved the sense of sharing and fraternity among students. Bedri Rahmi Eyüboğlu (As cited in Filiz, 2010: 212) describes this issue with his quite-clear remarks;

“I had been to Hasanoğlan on April 17, the anniversary day of the Institutes, and watched the festival organized in this context. One activity was [Nikolai] Gogol’s “The Government Inspector” performed by the students on the theater stage. I had watched a very few play in my life with this much pleasure. We were astonished totally. There were students among them who were adopted to their roles so much, they were playing so comfortably on the stage likewise they were winnowing grain. As if they were born on the stage! As if they had been so close to Moliere or Shakespeare in the villages like they had been with Nasrettin Hoca or Yunus Emre.”<sup>21</sup>

In the final analysis, it is quite unlikely to consider how the various kinds of buildings in the Village Institutes had been constructed. Because, all of those buildings were constructed by the students themselves!.. Most of the Institute buildings had been designed by the famous architects of those years. For instance, design of the Kepirtepe Village Institute was made by Leman Tomsu and Emin Onat

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<sup>21</sup> “Hasanoğlan’da Enstitülerin kuruluş günü olan 17 Nisan’ı, bu vesile ile yapılan şenlikleri gördüm. Bunlar arasında Gogol’ün Müfettiş’ini oynadılar. Ben ömrümde bu kadar zevkle, çok az oyun seyrettim... Şaşıtk, kaldık. İçlerinde aktörlüğü o kadar benimsemiş çocuklar vardı ki onlar iki-üç yıl önce harman yerinde ne kadar doğal harman savuruyorlarsa, sahnede öyle rahat dolaşıyor, konuşuyorlardı. Sanki orada doğmuşlar! Sanki köylerde Moliere ile, Shakespeare ile, Nasrettin Hoca ya da Yunus Emre kadar senli benli olmuşlardı.”



who was the architect of the Atatürk's mausoleum. Even though this was the situation, village children who had no construction education had built those many buildings with the support of their constructing instructors. Likewise, as a first step, a competition had been organized for the design of the relevant village institute to be constructed. Then, as a second step, the precondition to participate to those competitions was to live at least six months in the region at where the institute was envisaged to be constructed. This precondition was considered to realize for the architect in comprehending the regional folks as well as their conditions, necessities and goals. Thus, in the 21 regions of the country which were chosen as accurate as possible, the Institutes with young constructors began to adore their vicinity with the light of enlightenment. In this meaning, it is important to emphasize that all the buildings of the Institutes could be valued as monumental quality. The buildings of the Institutes anyhow had been determined and registered as monuments by the efforts of the Chamber of Architectures (Bektaş, 2010: 503-513).

Before delving into representation of the issues we have obtained so far as the results of our study, it would be appropriate to emphasize a summary of the remarkable points regarding training mentality and model of the Village Institutes. The Institutes had been an education model to raise up modern and secular people who adopted a collective administration, estimation and conviction, critical thinking, using intellect, mind and science for the ways of conflict resolution, believing in the motto, "Together we stand, divided we fall." Also, as for their training goals, understanding and curriculum, the Institutes had been one of the most important acquisitions of the Republic in the sense of making possible all sort of democratic participation, negotiations and discussions during all the educational processes (Seven Turan, 2010: 673).

In short, the education model adopted in the Village Institutes had been the story of an initiative to awake up and enlighten the Anatolian people from the dormancy, illiteracy, solitude and exploitation lasted for centuries. The best proof of this fact was those clear remarks of Kinyas Kartal (As cited in Cimi, 2001) who was a famous political figure, a Member of the Turkish Parliament and a landlord in the Eastern Turkey. After the closure of those unique institutions, he responded to a journalist's question,

"Were the rumours regarding the Village Institutes true?" as; "Those were not true. But if the schools would stay open for ten more years, people we ordered would not acknowledge us. My men were reading soldier letters even at the beginnings. By time, two villagers who settled in the villages under my order had educated in those

Institutes. They began to read and write letters of the villagers. They also helped for some other children to educate in those schools. For the circle getting larger by time was really alarming and startling for us.”<sup>22</sup>

## Conclusion

Historical memory enables lessons-learned from the past events, filtering the happenings and reasoning the point of where-to-where. Thus, even though they had been liquidated long time ago, it is likely to claim that the effects of the Village Institutes and their model, system, mentality and curriculum of which the unique places in the Turkish Education History were tried to be put forward thrivingly, still maintain in today’s Turkey. This stems from the necessity of pursuing their functions and responsibilities in the historical flow and improvement of time. It is due to the fact that under the harsh and extraordinary conditions of the World War II, the Institutes were realized in a very short of time, likewise 5-6 years, with a great social belief and understanding from the majority of the villagers. In this sense, reaching of their educational and pedagogical impacts and contributions upto today prove that the implementations of educational modelling of the Village Institutes are quite innovative in the meaning of permanency and durability of the system.

As clearly seen, by the establishment of the Institutes, for the people who once changed the nature had commenced a process of improvement of transforming and developing themselves. With the contribution of that civilization run invoked by the Institutes, Turkish villagers tried to indicate one of the most attractive example of transforming from being an obedient ‘server’ or ‘serfdom’ into free-thinking individuals. Thus, it would be appropriate to state that these institutions had been one of the best examples of displaying innovation how much the Anatolian people could be productive and creative when they were saved from illiteracy and exploitation.

Another conclusion we reached in our study is that the Village Institutes had been established targeting to carry modernization endeavours of the young Republic to the rural environments. In this frame, the Institutes had achieved quite many in taking farming education to the country-side, establishment of new agricultural tools

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<sup>22</sup> “Doğru değildi. Ama o okullar bir on yıl daha kalsaydı, emrimizdeki insanlar bizi tanımayacaktı. Önceleri asker mektuplarını bile benim adamlarım okurdu. Zaman içinde bana bağlı köylerden iki kişi o okullarda okumuş. Köylünün mektuplarını onlar okumaya ve yazmaya başladı. Onunla kalma-yıp, o okullara başka çocukların gitmesine yardımcı olmuşlar. Giderek halkanın büyümesi bizim açımızdan ürkütücüydü.”

and thus enabling a modern farming in the villages. However, it seems unlikely that the Institutes could accomplish a great many things in making the social life in the villages modern or preventing traditional structures and connections such as landlords, tribal chiefs or usurer-grasping traders. In this issue, it could be injustice to blame the Institutes directly. Because, that depended upon some basic reasons such as non-realization of the land reform which was necessary for the social transformation and the unbearable solitude of the Institutes in transforming and sorting out those traditional exploitation and false-loyalty structures in the rural areas.

Yet, another result we have reached in our study is that the Village Institutes had been unique and scientific training institutions which could be ideal models for the 21st century in the sense of democratization of the education as well as realization of the vocational training comprising productivity, creativity, sharing and cooperation. In this context, (1) Realization and implementation of the today's famous training notion "learning by doing and living" by the experience of the Village Institutes in the 1940s proves that the founders of the Institutes had a solid methodological assumption in this sense; (2) Parrot-fashion-like education models which outweigh in today's education system would not be realistic in raising up generations and thus encountering the new ages since they are worthless scientifically as well as away from covering the requirements of today's modern world (Bulut, 2010: 391). Because, in today's world where the the unlimitingly increasing science and technology become characteristic for the development criteria and the competitiveness of the States, makes questionable for Turkey to be able to reach to level of secular and modern Western countries with a parrot-fashion-like and consumer-kind education of today.

Last but not the least, considering the education policies implemented and appropriated by the current ruling political parties of "advanced democracy" in Turkey, it is deemed as necessary to adopt a modified version of the Village Institutes-like education model. That sort of an adoption makes us sense in achieving to grip the educational norms of the modern age. The reasons for that sense could be based upon some analysis we made in the study. If adopted, a modified model of the Village Institutes will most probably (1) enable any structural, but contemporary and secular shifts and transformations for the 21st-century-Turkish-society in all fields of social improvement; thus (2) equip today's "improving" society with more creative, productive and virtuous functions for the continuity of the Republican reforms even in the 21st century, as required.

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