

**VILLAGE INSTITUTES AS A REWORKED POLICY MODEL FOR THE TURKISH EDUCATION SYSTEM****Ali Buğra KÜÇÜK, alibugrakucuk@hotmail.com\*****ABSTRACT**

Village Institutes are one of the most controversial topics in the history of the Republic. All prejudices, positive or negative, towards the Village Institutes have crystallized and thus become far from objectivity. The more accusing and brutal those who are against the institutes, the advocates of the institutes are equally romantic and idealizing. Therefore, even after the Village Institutes take their place in the dusty pages of history, they can still be at the center of harsh discussions and political conflicts. There are no other educational programs or socio-economic projects discussed so much.

As an education model, which has a unique place in the history of Turkish education and is recommended by UNESCO today, Village Institutes have produced remarkable successful outputs despite all its negativities. Institutes offer an infrastructure that can be adapted to our contemporary education system by taking into consideration these positive features that can produce successful output, and by taking into consideration, the criticisms directed to them. The aim of this study is to examine the place of Village Institutes in Turkish education history and what Village Institutes mean as a socio-economic project for today's education system. Thus, it is aimed to provide a framework for Village Institutes to draw the attention they deserve and to be brought to agenda as a new and reworked solution for Turkey's chronic educational problems.

**Keywords:** Village Institutes, Education, Republic, Village, Training.

**TÜRK EĞİTİM SİSTEMİ İÇİN YENİDEN ELE ALINMIŞ BİR POLİTİKA MODELİ OLARAK KÖY ENSTİTÜLERİ****ÖZET**

Köy Enstitüleri, Cumhuriyet tarihinin en tartışmalı konularından biridir. Köy Enstitülerine Yönelik olumlu veya olumsuz tüm önyargılar, kristalize olmuş ve dolayısıyla objektiflikten uzak hâle gelmiştir. Enstitülere karşı olanlar ne kadar suçlayıcı ve acımasızsa, enstitüleri savunanlar da aynı ölçüde romantik ve idealize eder bir biçimde konuyu ele almaktadırlar. Dolayısıyla Köy Enstitüleri tarihin tozlu sayfalarındaki yerlerini aldıktan sonra dahi, hala sert tartışmaların ve siyasi çekişmelerin odağında yer alabilmektedir. Üzerinde bu kadar çok tartışılan başka bir eğitim programı veya sosyo-ekonomik proje bulunmamaktadır.

Türk eğitim tarihinde kendine özgü bir yeri olan ve günümüzde UNESCO tarafından önerilen bir eğitim modeli olarak Köy Enstitüleri, tüm olumsuzluklarına rağmen dikkat çekici başarılı çıktılar da üretmiştir. Enstitüler, başarılı çıktı üretebilen bu olumlu özellikleri örnek alınarak günümüze adapte edilebilir ve vaktiyle kendilerine yöneltile eleştiri maddeleri dikkate alınarak çağdaş eğitim sistemimize uyarlanabilir bir alt yapı sunmaktadır. Bu çalışmanın amacı Türk eğitim tarihi içerisinde Köy Enstitülerinin nasıl bir yer tuttuğunu ve sosyo-ekonomik bir proje olarak Köy Enstitülerinin günümüz eğitim sistemi için ne ifade ettiğini incelemektir. Böylece Köy Enstitülerinin hakettiği ilgiye kavuşması ve Türkiye'nin kronikleşmiş eğitim sorunlarına yeni bir çözüm yolu olarak tekrar gündeme gelebilmesi için bir çerçeve sunulması hedeflenmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Köy Enstitüleri, Eğitim, Cumhuriyet, Köy, Öğretim.

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Derleme Makalesi.

Sayfa Sayısı:289-308

Makale Geliş Tarihi: 28.12.2020

Makale Kabul Tarihi: 11.02.2021

## INTRODUCTION

One of the expectations for the opening of the Village Institutes was that the Republic's aim to "culturally change the peasant in reaching the modern society". In other words, it was to contribute to the transformation of medieval social relations in villages and towns into the culture and relations brought by the Enlightenment Age through education. The other was to increase the production by providing the economic transformation of the village, namely agriculture, and to contribute to the development of industry and therefore capitalism by creating new resources. This was the change in the status of the peasant from the Empire; in other words, it meant that the "landowner-sharecropper relationship" would suffer a great blow both culturally and economically.

In order to achieve this long-term goal, the traditional understanding of education of the Ottoman Empire should be abandoned and an educational philosophy aimed at the overall development of the individual both physically and psychologically should have been adopted. This kind of education was, of course, not the invention of the founders of the Village Institutes. In fact, this was the modern reflection of an educational philosophy that has its origins in antiquity.

In Ancient Greece, *theoria* versus *praxis* contradiction was actually an extension of the human-nature contradiction. The effort to understand and explain the "existing" through thought brought together the view of "education" as its necessary formation. This understanding of education was humanistic and intellectual, based on the education of human beings as human beings, and aimed at "all-round development" through gymnastics and music (Aytaç, 1972:17). When it comes to the Roman period, it is seen that the practical aspect of education is more prevalent - since it was not a self-sufficient economy unlike Ancient Greece, but a more developed and commercial economic system was adopted. All branches of art, philosophy, sciences were perceived in Rome as a whole for practice (Aytaç, 1972:18).

By the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the fully theocratic mindset of the Middle Ages began to be challenged, and the sprouts of scientific thought were thus manifesting itself. In this period when positive sciences were on the rise, the idea that education was a valid right for everyone became widespread, and it was demanded that education be versatile and organized in a way that includes all human activities. Economies were now much larger and more developed than before, and the need for trained manpower to this extent was increasing. At this point, it should be noted that the training of the body and mind in the education required for "qualified manpower" was completely separated from each other (Russell, 2001:36). With the effect of the Renaissance, the shifting of education to all masses of people, the application of education to practice, the completion of school and living spaces came to the fore again. The thesis that the basic motivation of education is that it is "for life" has become widespread. Thus, education seemed to return to its Ancient Greek line. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, thinkers such as Thomas More, Campanella, and in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Charles Fourier argued that human beings should be educated in all aspects, intellectual and practical integrity. For example, Fourier said on this subject: "(...) that is, the purpose of society's education is to allow the full development of bodily and mental abilities and to combine them with productive work" (Cited by: Aytaç, 1972:16).

With advances in technology and industry in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, it became even more important to educate people and qualify them for jobs. Education was no longer seen as a separate field of activity, but as a part of life. With business school theorists and educators such as Pestalozzi

(2020), Froebel (2019), Kerschensteiner (1954), etc., more production-oriented views and education policies for purposes such as training in work, learning by living, training for work, and education for life became widespread (Demirtaş & Özer, 2015:208).

It is clear that all educational activities and processes are determined according to the material, economic structures and technical characteristics of societies. The Turkish education system is no different. The Village Institute model, which was developed according to the political climate and economic needs of the post-National Campaign period, deserves a special interest in the history of Turkish education, which has been shaped according to the needs of both the political structure and the economic structure throughout history, both in terms of the discussion space it creates and its unique position in Turkish education history. This study aims to determine the place of Village Institutes in Turkish education history, and inspired by this education model exemplified by UNESCO, to provide a discussion of contemporary Turkey to create a new model for its educational and economic needs.

## **1. HISTORICAL BASES OF THE TURKISH EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY**

### **1.1. An Overview of Ottoman Empire Education**

In the Ottoman Empire, as in all empires of the Late Middle Ages and New Age, school education did not fully spread to all levels of society. Not only in villages and nomadic tribes, but also in cities and towns, most children were deprived of school education, but a small minority of the population had the opportunity to study and be educated (Tonguç, 1932:196-198). The empire, by its nature, had many different cultures. For this reason, and because of the fact that the educational opportunities of the empire were not very developed, out-of-school education developed in different ways and places, and produced different results. By the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there were two main educational institutions in the Ottoman Empire: primary schools and madrasas.

Primary education was given in primary schools. Since Sharia ordered girls to be educated, boys and girls between the ages of 4-6 were studying together in these schools. These schools were established by private individuals (wealthy notables, courtiers, sometimes sultans) independently of the state or with the support of the public in places where these people were not available. These schools, where religious education is essential and the main lines of Islam are explained to children, did not charge any fees (Sakaoğlu, 2003:112). Due to the content and subject of the education provided here, the language of instruction in these schools was mostly Arabic. The instructor who will work as a teacher in these institutions should have been a madrasa graduate. However, this principle was not applied in all madrasas. Literate imams and elders who knew the Quran and prayers were sometimes able to undertake this task (Sakaoğlu, 2003:127).

Madrasas were not only the educational institutions of the Ottoman Empire, but also the entire Islamic world (Başgöz, 1995:10). The second task of madrasas, one of which was to prepare students for higher education, was to provide students with an education and training equivalent to high school/associate degree and undergraduate. This institution, where the housing, food and clothing needs of the students were met and paid at certain intervals, was free like primary schools; but differently it was a boarding school. As of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, almost all positive sciences (except mathematics) were removed from the madrasa education programs, which were dominated by a theocratic perspective in most courses. A serious deterioration occurred in these institutions -

especially in the period of decline -, where there was no observation and experimentation, where little importance was attached to practice, and where the scholastic education style was predominant. On the other hand, in the Ottoman Empire, madrasas were very successful institutions in their duties of spreading religion, reinforcing religious knowledge, and kneading a Muhammad ummah from various Muslim societies. This success has arisen from the working hand in hand with other institutions of the society in the same direction. Islam has guided society's institutions such as education, politics, art and literature, and even the economy (Başgöz, 1995:15).

After the 18<sup>th</sup> century, severe military defeats of the state shifted the attention of statesmen to this area, the lack of modern knowledge and techniques of the army and military training institutions was seen as the main factor in the defeats, and innovation movements in education were initiated for the first time, especially by focusing on military officer training. However, in this movement, which started about 200 years after Europe, there is no compulsory formal education understanding that ensures the development of citizen consciousness and aims at positive science due to the military focus of innovation (Avşaroğlu, 1970:13).

Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the collapse accelerated, the Ottoman Empire entered into an effort to innovate in the military field. However, this innovation took the form of imitating the West rather than an original innovation movement. With this effort, a dualism in every field of Ottoman society and a stuck between the culture and technique of the East and the West would be observed. Likewise, the religious values on which all spheres of the empire were built would be pushed into this dualism (Hilav, 2008:383).

The first attempts of innovation started in the army during the reign of Selim III and Mahmut II and were reflected in the civil education system very slowly (Topses, 1982:178). With the *Tanzimat* (Reorganization) movement, non-Muslim minorities would be included in education activities. During the Tanzimat period, the movements that affected education and many other areas were Westernism and Islamism. The dualism between modern and ancient beliefs and their practices became visible in this period. Besides providing valuable institutions for the development of education such as *Encümen-i Daniş* (Society of Scholars) and *Rüştiye Mektepleri* (High Schools), Tanzimat also ensured the transition from madrasas to modern education and students to receive secondary education (Görür, 2015:312). In addition, during this period, schools, blackboards, maps, etc. lesson tools were also included, and the students had the opportunity to experiment, albeit partially. However, both the inability to internalize innovations and the submission of modern values in a top-down manner to a society ruled by absolute authority for centuries were not considered as a sustainable initiative by neither political power holders nor the public. That is, the innovation movement that developed with the Tanzimat could not touch the madrasas and other traditional educational institutions, and could not generate a change; new and old educational institutions have concretized the duality by continuing their existence simultaneously. As a result, as Avşaroğlu stated; the nation, in poverty, misery and above all ignorance, is stuck between a life that consists of solely providing soldiers and paying taxes, as before (Avşaroğlu, 1970:17). Because the students who were tried to be educated with traditional education methods started life confused and they lacked the knowledge that would fit real life and production.

The Second Constitutional Monarchy is another development that has an important role in shaping both the Ottoman and the current Turkish education system. Ottoman intellectuals, even

though they could not be fully realized in this period, has developed a variety of systems such as the idea of Westernism, Turkism and Islamism, which were effective both in that era and in the history of the Republic of Turkey. The staff, which will give direction to education in the first decade of the Republic of Turkey, has grown in the Second Constitutional Era (Başgöz, 1995:38). During the Second Constitutional Era, “*Tedrisat-ı İptidaiye Kanun-ı Muvakkati*” (Temporary Primary Education Law) was enacted.\* Also in this period, the foundation of a university for women was laid, and some schools that were thought not to meet a certain standards in education were attached to *Maarif Nezareti* (Ministry of Education). Not all these efforts and expenditures for education could be put into practice due to the Balkan Wars that started right after the enactment of the law (Uyanık & Çam, 2012:415-416).

The Ottoman Empire used education to consolidate its sovereignty and to ensure the continuity of its hegemony over its subjects - as all states do -. Therefore, the Ottoman education system, despite the existence of reformist sultans and rulers, could not exhibit a realistic transformation by separating from its traditional form, which was not fully reformed. As stated above, Tanzimat and the Second Constitutional Monarchy ignored the productive forces, socio-economic situation, dynamism and cultural environment of the society, were imposed on people from the top-down, but they were contradictory to the society and therefore were not effective. The Ottoman Empire, which includes many nations, could not achieve its internal integrity in the education system and could not respond to the educational demands of these different nations. It is obvious that the education system, which was tried to be revised by ignoring the purposes such as accessing technology, science and knowledge of modern civilizations, developing the personalities and skills of individuals, providing qualified workforce, would obviously not meet the needs of the required technological structure, productive forces, qualified labor force, etc.

### 1.2. Educational Activities during the War of Independence

Before explaining the educational philosophy and policy in the Republican era, it is important to touch upon briefly the educational policy and problems in the years of the War of Independence between the Ottoman and Republic periods in terms of understanding the historical background. The years of the War of Independence made the gap between Ottoman intellectuals and politicians and the Anatolian people living in poverty, ignorance and misery visible. The period of the War of Independence is important because the intellectuals and the army realized this deep gap between them and the Anatolian people, who were their mere supporter and this awakening affected the subsequent education policies. On this issue, Hamdullah Suphi, Minister of National Education conveys:

*“Gentlemen, Anatolia is a stranger to us. Anatolia is an unknown country to us. Mustafa Bey, Tokat deputy, states the educational status of this unknown country: ‘The population of my liva (shire) is over 100 thousand. There are not even two intellectuals here. Why did they build all the schools to Istanbul, Bursa, and they left us without education? We have to take care of this problem. You are traveling by car, I walk. It is the same in education; education is viewed in a different light here’.”* (Kolektif, 1946:204)

\* This law, with some modifications, remained in force in the Republic of Turkey for a long time.



The main problem expressed here was tried to be solved by various initiatives, especially the Village Institutes play a crucial role to resolve challenges in education, during the years of the War of Independence and the Republic period until the 1950s, but failed despite all efforts. This problem, which was inherited in the 1950s, became apparent again in these years, but thanks to the economic breakthroughs of the Democrat Party government, its volume decreased and changed its shape to a great extent (Tangülü, 2012:405). The problem of not expanding educational opportunities across the country with a standard quality will continue to exist partially until today.

The Ankara Government established *Maarif Vekâleti* (Ministry of National Education) on May 2, 1920 (Başgöz, 1995:53). The Ministry has prepared a program that aims to improve the state of education, secularize education and base it on contemporary scientific foundations, and make the public productive.\* Although it is an innovative national education program prepared by idealist intellectuals, the absence of a full ministry organization made the implementation of the program difficult. According to the statistics collected with difficulties, there are a total of 2345 schools in 38 provinces under the Ankara Government. 581 of these schools are closed. Some of these schools were closed by the administrators due to borrowing, while some were closed by the public. Ayas quotes an interesting anecdote:

*“(...) the people say that you want 10 thousand liras from us for schools. We will give 20 thousand liras. However, if no students pray in schools, the nation will not see anything good from that education. Therefore, our education does not hold a place in the heart of our nation. Our schools are inferior to the public. Because the schools do not respect the basic principles of religion and the traditions of the country.”* (Ayas, 1948:186) *“(...) there are also those among our schools that are not closed. One of them is Medical School and the other is Military Schools. Because these schools raise professionals who meet the needs. What drives children to these schools is to have a profession after they graduate”* (Ayas, 1948:213).

One of the difficulties of the war years in terms of education was the inability to pay primary school teachers. Primary school, high school and training collage teachers who received their salaries from the provincial special administrations could not get their salaries properly. There have been teachers who could not receive a salary for 8-10 months, sometimes more than one year (Başgöz, 1995:57). This economic problem would continue to exist as one of the main problems of the Republican era education system in the upcoming years. During the War of Independence, the greatest contribution of the Ankara Government to education is its efforts for public education. Of course, these efforts should be seen as a necessary result of the current situation back then.

### 1.3. Educational Practices in the Republic of Turkey

Educational problems seen in almost every period in the history of Turkey were also present during the Republic era. In addition to the quantitative problems such as the lack of schools and teachers, lack of equipment, limited budget to spend on education, there were also qualitative problems such as the lack of a specific and purposeful educational philosophy.

In 1923, Izmir Economic Congress, which was held to determine the economic road map of the Republic of Turkey, had a thought model that actually revealed the outline of the ideas to be

\* For the details of the program, see: Ayas, 1948.

implemented in the education system (Topses, 1982:203). This outline, besides the civic education aiming to consolidate and disseminate the ideology of the republic, chose to educate the peasant, rural people, to make them productive, as the main approach. The aim was especially to develop the village and the villagers, to equip the villagers with basic agricultural knowledge, and to mobilize manpower trained in agriculture (Topses, 1982:203). Secularization of education and exclusion of religion from education programs can be considered among the aims of education in this period.

During the reform years, the dualist structure in education created by the madrasas of the Eastern culture and the new educational institutions of the West was solved in 1924 with *Tevhid-i Tedrisat Kanunu* (Law of the Unification of Teaching). This law contained the following articles:

1. All scientific and educational institutions in Turkey was centralized by the Ministry of National Education.
2. All madrasas and schools administered by the Ministry of Sharia and Foundations or private foundations were transferred to the Ministry of National Education (Özalp & Ataüinal, 1977:36).

With this law, education was unified and madrasas, which were part of the traditional education model, were closed. Purified from religious content and symbols, the Turkish education system was beginning to gain a secular and earthly character. Later, Imam Hatip Schools were opened in 27 centrums in 1924 to train civil servants to manage religious ceremonies (Çakır & Bozan & Talu, 2004:57). In the 1930s, these schools were closed on account of the fact that they could not find students.\*

During this period, education experts were invited from abroad to prepare a training program as required by the conditions; curricula and regulations were reviewed. In 1926, with the Law No. 789 on the National Education Organization, The National Education Organization, school types, the rights and powers of the Ministry and teachers were determined. Teaching became a profession with Law No. 1702 enacted in 1930 (Official Newspaper/ Resmi Gazete, Law No. 1702 dated 29.06.1930, Articles 4, 5 and 15). Coeducation practices were also decided. The Ottoman Empire collapsed and a new nation-state was established in its place. Therefore, there were no more nations left to be interconnected with Arabic as a *lingua franca*. For this reason, the Latin alphabet was adopted to eliminate the influence of religion in many areas of life, to apply French-style secularism and to purify the intellectual life from religion. Practical arts schools were opened, as in Western education systems; vocational and technical education was linked to the central administration.

The greatest contribution of the Republic period to the Turkish education system was the adoption of the educational understanding for production, the use of education in rural areas to increase productivity and accelerate development. In this way, an education policy, which was based on the real structure of the economy, has been adopted and planned, and would shape the cultural level of the people in accordance with the objectives of the economy in question.

What suffered the most during the Republic period was the lack of qualified, educated manpower in line with the socio-cultural and economic structure of the country that was established

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\* The Democrat Party, which came to power after the 1950 elections, reopened Imam Hatip Schools. Imam Hatip Schools were opened in 7 provinces in the period of 1951-1952. Their number increased to 19 in 1958, 26 in 1962, 72 in 1971 and 101 in 1974. The number of students of these institutions, which could not find students when they were first established in the Republican period, increased continuously from the 1950s to the mid-2000s.

on an economic depression. More than 80% of the people lived in rural areas and the economic system implemented until then did not require the education of the entire population. The public did not demand this anyway. The fact that education was abstract and far from life did not make him attractive. This understanding pushed the peasant to backwardness and ignorance. In rural areas that do not require modern education, problems such as health, lack of production, lack of job diversity were also emerging. In this direction, the basic policy of the Izmir Economic Congress on education gains a different quality:

Art.1: Books and magazines written in a way that teach the villagers and farmers various branches of agriculture should be printed and distributed free of charge.

Art.2: In general primary schools and other secondary schools, industry and agriculture should be taught as well as in advanced countries.

Art.3: For the villages that are close to each other in each *liva*, a boarding primary school with sufficient land should be opened and the practical and theoretical agriculture lessons should be given at those schools.

Art.4: In each *liva*, one or more schools in the nature of exemplary farms that will provide practical agriculture education according to its size should be established.

Art.9: In every *liva*, a mobile agriculture school should be opened for now; in this way, conferences and films should be presented to the villagers and their agricultural knowledge should be increased.\*

As it can be seen, the decisions of the congress about education reveal that education will actually develop towards a practice meeting an economic need, rather than just teaching abstract information. Schools would no longer be institutions that could not find their place in the village shrouded by mosques, but as small businesses where business and education intertwine. Thus, both economic development would be accelerated and the “workability” level of the villagers would be increased.

## 2. VILLAGE INSTITUTES AS AN INVENTIVE EXPERIMENT

Village Institutes were born as a project of reviving and shaping the village in order to ensure economic development, as well as primarily to raise individuals compatible with republican values. Because, in rural areas where the majority of the population lives, it is not possible for the country to reach prosperity unless individuals are educated and brought into a productive and creative state. The drive for development had to be started from the ground up; first, the peasant intellectual generation had to be raised. As Aydın stated:

*“(...) although the liberation of the country was achieved fifteen years ago, the country could not be saved from ignorance and poverty, and the language revolution and literacy mobilization were not enough for the reconstruction and development of the country. The country’s population of approximately 16 million is literate around 2.5 million. In other words, only one out of seven people can read and write. It is a pity that the revolutions have not reached 40 thousand villages yet. In many villages, there are those who do not even know about the proclamation of the republic. In fact, the*

\* For detailed information, see: Başgöz, 1995.



*situation is so dire that people asked İ. H. Tonguç 'Who is the sultan now?' on an Eastern Anatolia trip" (Aydın, 2007:10).*

The survival, development and full independence of the young republic relied on its ability to process its own resources and establish its industry without being dependent on any foreign country. For this, passive people who produced only enough for themselves and worked only for their own needs had to be made "real" producers. In addition to emphasizing the necessity of an education move, it is also an emphasis on the fact that education can be effective and efficient if only it is based on a solid economic foundation. Thus, the education process will be brought closer to life, and the support and belief of the people who feel the practical benefits of education in their daily lives will be provided (Katoğlu, 2008:429).

In order to increase the production capability in the country, to increase the quality of life and thus to increase the income that will lead to the development of education, an economic content has been introduced to education programs through trade and industry education. Designed by the pragmatist educational philosophy of American pedagogue John Dewey, Village Institutes were born with this core idea and they have taken their place as *sui generis* institutions in the history of Turkish education and in the economic and cultural fields by raising individuals above the expectations with an education program far beyond its original idea (Güvenç, 1998:56).

By 1935, the number of schools in the villages where 80% of the country's population lived was almost nonexistent. A small number of teachers who were found and sent to these schools from the cities could not be successful in the villages. Because they could not integrate with the peasant, saw the villager inferior and could not approach the problems of the village. Similarly, the people of the village could not adopt the teacher. They walked around wearing clothes contrary to them, and the abstract information they taught could not provide any benefit to the students in daily life. As a result, the villagers avoided the teacher in terms of the importance and assistance they gave to the imam who ran for prayer, religious education, funeral and marriage (Eren, 2009:53).

The educational needs of the rural people were not limited to literacy; the peasants could not fight infectious diseases, they produced their goods by primitive methods. The peasants, who suffered the heavy burden of the War of Independence, had not yet become true citizens of the Republic. It was very difficult to serve the village between the years 1930-1940. Village service efforts undertaken with the Republic was left incomplete because either they did not meet the expectations of the villager or they were not successfully carried out. For success, a new type of intellectual who understood the language of the peasant was needed. This might come out of the peasant itself. The educator Ismail Hakkı Tonguç, who caught this point well, was a peasant's son himself, would be both the theorist and the founder of the Village Institute system (Katoğlu, 2008:429). Saffet Arıkan, the Minister of National Education, one of the former staff of Atatürk, appointed him, and the next Minister, Hasan Ali Yücel, claimed his initiatives. Tonguç explained the type of intellectual he thought to create with the following words:

*"We must create such a type of teacher that he/she not only cultivates the village's beliefs and affects their social institutions. May he/she also change the face of the village and its economic life. The qualifications that this teacher will have can be listed as follows:*

1. *To be active in the beliefs of the village (leadership of principles such as revolutionism, secularism and republicanism in the village)*
2. *To be able to influence the social life of the village (implementation of the civil law in the village, ensuring that its rules are obeyed in the family, in people's relations)*
3. *To be effective in the material and economic life of the village (advanced agricultural methods, wide exchange of goods, bringing regulated market relations into the village)*
4. *Being an intellectual (being a well-trained school teacher, having acquired all the good qualifications of the teaching profession)" (Tonguç, 1932:419)*

Education and training in production, which was the basic philosophy of Tonguç, was the most important basic principle in the application of Village Institutes (Ertuğrul, 2002:35). Thus, it was his only wish to both ensure the revitalization of the village and to raise an "organic intellectual" in the Gramscian meaning, who would respond to the demands of the Republic.

İsmail Hakkı Tonguç first made a serious village study, evaluated the figures and what was done in the past, and drafted a 20-year plan. According to this plan, there would be no village left until 1954 without teachers, guardians, agricultural technicians and health services. However, realizing this plan would not be easy at all, because first of all, finding literate village children and students for the institutes to be opened was a big problem (Türkoğlu, 1997:112). The families were hesitant to send their children.\* Despite the resistance of classical educators, Tonguç opened a four-month course at Çifteler Farm in Eskişehir in 1936, in order to assign a group of literate youth who had completed their military service as "instructors" and "temporary teachers" in villages. The first 84 instructors assigned in Ankara villages by completing these courses were extremely successful and the instructor courses were opened and multiplied in other parts of the country in a short time (Aysal, 2005:9). Trainer candidates also built the first buildings of the Village Institutes to be opened. Educators who went to their villages were obliged to teach and graduate the children they collected for three years, to convey the health problems in the village to the district governor, to teach modern agricultural techniques to the villagers, and to teach adults literacy, calculus and citizenship through evening schools (Aysal, 2005:9). When a positive result was obtained from this first application, the Law of Village Trainers enacted on June 11, 1937 brought legal functionality to the instructorship. The training of instructors continued as independent courses until the Village Institutes were established, and after that, they continued under them.

The positive results of the experience of village teacher schools and instructor courses showed that there was a need for further planning, and a draft law was prepared according to brand new principles and submitted to the Turkish Grand National Assembly. Later, with the efforts of Hasan Ali Yücel, the Minister of National Education, and İsmail Hakkı Tonguç, the draft law was legalized under the name of the Law on Village Institutes No. 3803, and Village Institutes were established on April 17, 1940.\*

\* Male labor, composed of children who survived the War of Independence, were recruited again, and women and children remained in the villages. Therefore, institutes were established with "child labor". The villagers, on the other hand, did not want to send children, their only support, to school. Especially finding a girl was very difficult.

\* The schools were named as "institutes" because it envisaged an education that would apply knowledge by making it an occupation.

Understanding that the traditional comprehension of education will not meet the needs of the new Republic, Tonguç shaped the education at the Village Institutes in a way that can be called extremely idealistic, completely out of this comprehension. Due to the economic bottleneck, one side of the education would be technical, and the other side would be the cultural and artistic elements required. Within the framework of the “on-the-job training” principle, students would both work, build their own schools, produce their food and not burden the state; they would develop their minds and abilities by engaging in artistic activities such as music, physical education, painting and theater (Eren, 2009:45). Thus, as Europe and other developed countries did, the Republic of Turkey would also provide both economic and social development simultaneously. Village Institutes, an unprecedented, completely Turkish invention and an education model recommended by UNESCO, were socially rooted and socially oriented educational institutions where adaptation and thinking, hearing and processing were combined in accordance with Tonguç’s aims of raising awareness about democracy and human rights, increasing the literacy rate, boosting agricultural productivity, creating environmental awareness and establishing and internalizing humanism in the form of mass thinking (Arayıcı, 1999:278-279).

In the Village Institutes, history, civic knowledge, mathematics, physics, chemistry, foreign language, physical education, music, business education, agricultural business economics, housekeeping, cooperatives, agriculture and art were taught (Avşaroğlu, 1970:24). Girls and boys were obliged to participate in agricultural affairs according to the situation of the region where the institute is located. The workshops, which were carried out in order to teach the student another profession other than teaching, were organized according to the needs of male and female students. Boys attended courses such as blacksmithing, construction, stonemasonry and cooperatives, while female students attended classes such as sewing and cutting, canning, poultry breeding, weaving and childcare (Aydın, 2007:88). 50% of the total time given to courses was allocated to general culture and vocational courses, 25% to business and 25% to agriculture courses and studies (Altunya, 2005:46-47). Environmental awareness was instilled in students by the Institutes, and the arid and swampy areas where they were established were afforested by the students themselves. In addition, while experiencing the economic difficulties brought about by the Second World War, the students of the Institute were trying to meet their own needs with their own means; while many villages did not have electricity, they were establishing their own power plants. The striking point here is that the Institutes can create resources by themselves and reduce their expenses to the state (Yılmaz, 1977:74).

Principally, it is imperative that those who will be brought up in institutions opened to raise awareness among the villagers should be raised with a personality. There is no good from oppressed people; it is inevitable for a person trained to beat others to beat others (Ekmekçi, 1996:127). Being aware of this, the educator Tonguç, with a move beyond his era, prohibited teachers from beating students in the Institutes. Otherwise, the student also had the right to respond to the teacher. This progress, which is of great importance in terms of pedagogy, overcomes the principle of “continuous supervision and pressure on the student” in the traditional understanding of education, ensures the student’s self-confidence and ensures that his personality is not harmed (Yılmaz, 1977:75).

Another feature of the Institutes that should be emphasized is that they were participatory institutions. Meetings were held at regular intervals in the Institutes and all students and Institute members would express their requests and complaints at this meeting. Even those who scorned the institutes could not talk about favoritism and bribery in the institutes. Village children who received an egalitarian education did not tolerate separate treatment even for the president (Küçük, 2019:32). However, this situation would ironically be one of the cornerstones of the negative perception towards the Institutes.

Education is a human right; everyone deserves to be educated. Tonguç was an educator who was aware of this and had established Institutes to illuminate the darkness that had been built on the people and the villagers for years. However, his fight against ignorance, his literacy movement and his attempt to make the peasant producers disturbed some traditional and feudal ruling circles who feared the educated people. In 1784, in his famous article named “*What is Enlightenment?*”, Immanuel Kant emphasizes that most of the people are not able to mature by their own will due to cowardice and that it is very easy for others to come to these people as rulers. Because it is very comfortable for these people to remain immature: “When I have a book that thinks instead of me, a religious man who takes the place of my conscience, a doctor who takes care of my diet, there is no need to bear any trouble anymore. As long as I can spend money, it does not matter whether I can think or not” (Kant, 2005:263-264). As a result, this was one of the reasons the Institutes were shut down: It was not desired that the crowd to be ruled would mature.\* In addition, the local feudal structure, as well as those who held power in the political system, were against the Institutions. Because the landing of the people, their learning about advanced agricultural techniques and their progress in the socio-cultural field, besides harming the interests of these village masters, it also made it difficult for them to mobilize the people (Small, 2019:28). The peasant, who gained the skills enough to sustain their life in the institutes and even gained the equipment to provide input to the economic system by going beyond this, turned into *homo faber* in a sense so that they stopped believing in fortune and magic of the preachers, they were following the science; they were not going to rain prayer, they were learning meteorology. Feudal power bodies, who were afraid of children raised in this way, started attacking the Institutes for this.

Some rumors were spread by these circles in order to demand the closure of the Village Institutes. Despite all the positive developments, the difficulties encountered in the construction of village schools, education and training in the Institutes led to some criticisms and these criticisms gradually turned into accusations. Propaganda and criticism against the Village Institutes were the subject of the agenda at the Second Education Council held in 1943. It is possible to list these criticisms and accusations arising from different reasons as follows: The recruitment of only village children to the Institutes and the assignment of their graduates to the villages again created a peasant-urban distinction, that is, a class difference in the society, and this division was also contrary to the Populism principle and understanding included in the Constitution. It was claimed that an education and training reflecting the far-left, even communist ideology, was carried out in the Institutes. The employment of students in school construction, agricultural and technical

\* Interestingly, these wishes were openly articulated. Tefik İleri and Reşat Şemsettin Sırer, one of the ministers of the period, united in opposition to the Institutes. Sırer's words such as “should they study and kill us?”, “they taught village children to write without teaching them to be quiet”, “I do not want the donkey I ride to be smart” point to the foundation of the opposition to the Institute (Ekmekçi, 1996:6).

applications, cleaning and maintenance works resembled Soviet Russia and communist regimes, and this type of education was contradicted with the principle of Nationalism. It was thought that the management staff of the institutes were generally filled by leftists and Marxists. Coeducation, that is, togetherness of boys and girls, applied in boarding institutes did not comply with the Turkish understanding of family and morality. The obligations imposed on the villagers in the construction of schools, workshops, teachers' houses and sending children to school were extremely heavy, and the implementation of a uniform school building project especially in areas of the country where transportation was difficult increased the construction costs. These obligations were also against the principle of equality of the Constitution (Turan, 1999:46-47). Productive education in the Institutes was also criticized, it was said that it had deficiencies in terms of nationalism and traditionalism, and even the crisis created by the Second World War in the country was attributed to the educational mistakes (Yalman, 1990:25). Indeed, while many of these criticisms were consistent and logical in itself, the heart of the matter was the feudal system: the training of the poor children within the Village Institutes, the awakening of the peasants, and the questioning of the peasantry that had persisted in the villages for centuries began to create a fear. With the thought that this could only happen in Russia, the people who carried out a denigration campaign against the Institutes, the politicians who saw their interests in jeopardy, brought their smear to Çankaya and prepared the ground for the closure of the Village Institutes (Gediklioğlu, 1971:496). Finally, with the law number 6234 enacted on January 27, 1954, during the period of Tevfik İleri, who served as the Minister of National Education in the first cabinet of the Democrat Party, the Village Institutes were completely turned into teacher schools and closed (Aysal, 2005:9).

The closure of the institutes affected many areas. Because Institutes were not just educational institutions; on the one hand, they were a means of training teachers and providing the "qualified staff" needed by the economic system, on the other hand, they were institutions that teach life to individuals with the principle of "on-the-job training". It would be useful to examine the state of education system after the Institutes, which were not found useful, closed down, and became a turning point in the history of Turkish education.

### **3. CONTEMPORARY PROBLEMS THAT CAN BE SOLVED WITH THE VILLAGE INSTITUTES SYSTEM**

The Village Institutes system has the potential to solve many problems faced by today's educational philosophy, as it can implement the principles of total and lifelong learning. In fact, some of the problems encountered today arise from not following the educational philosophy implemented by the Village Institutes. These current problems of the Turkish education system range from access to material to personnel quality.

The basic unit of all educational institutions is the school. The education process takes place in these units. The general structure of the national education system has been determined by the National Education Fundamental Law No. 1739. The school, which constitutes the core of the Turkish education system, is a place that prepares and presents experiences that will bring new behaviors or remove unwanted behaviors to the students wanted to be educated, in accordance with the predetermined educational objectives. The aim of this method is to increase the quality and quantity of education (Başaran, 2006:71).



The Turkish National Education system consists of two main parts, formal and non-formal. The purpose of formal education is to provide regular education given to individuals in a certain age group at certain periods in schools depending on the determined objectives and programs. Formal education includes pre-school education, primary education, secondary education, and higher education institutions. Major pre-school institutions are nurseries, kindergartens, infant schools and practice classes. Primary schools, boarding primary education institutions, boarding primary schools, mobile central primary schools, and open primary schools are basic primary education institutions. Secondary education institutions are composed of general high schools, foreign language-based high schools, Anatolian high schools, science high schools, Anatolian fine arts high schools, Anatolian teacher high schools, open education high schools, social sciences high schools and sports high schools (Türk, 2015:98-100). Higher education institutions that undertake tasks such as meeting the high-level labor force requirement of the society, ensuring the transfer of culture from generation to generation, and helping to solve social problems through scientific research, consist of universities, high technology institutes, colleges, conservatories, vocational high schools and research and application centers. The education provided to citizens who have never entered the formal education system, or who are at any level or who have exited from this level constitutes the non-formal education part of the Turkish education system (Türk, 2015:17).

Schools, which are the cornerstones of the education system, have many structural problems. First, schools are quantitatively and qualitatively insufficient to meet the needs. In Turkey, whose population is increasing, inevitably, schools are also getting crowded, as a natural result of this, the quality of education is gradually decreasing and scientific education is compromised (Sidat & Bayar, 2018:259; Güçlü & Altan, 2020:1053-1054; Demirtaş, 1988:52-57; Uygun, 2003:118-119; ERG Raporu, 2017:8). On the other hand, the most widely spread institution within the state apparatus is the Ministry of Education. Therefore, it must have an organizational structure that is dynamic, constantly renewing itself and responding to the requirements of the time in order to provide the necessary training in the best way to the service areas it is responsible for. However, the institution could not provide this flexibility and the educational institutions affiliated to it became increasingly bureaucratized; it has not been able to follow innovations and develop an ever-changing understanding. Excessive centralization prevents schools from having a democratic understanding of education and limits their ability to make rapid decisions. As Akçay stated, another problem is that teachers in schools are made the sole educator. However, today, in education, there is a need for more specialized labor force employment (Akçay, 2006:131).

The types of schools available in secondary education are quite diverse. For example, there are 10 types of schools under general secondary education alone. In vocational secondary education, there are 25 types of schools affiliated to four general directorates (Akçay, 2006:131). So many types of schools bring nothing but confusion. It is scientifically proven that the creation of a secondary education structure consisting of a multi-disciplinary, more-choice-but-few schools instead of a secondary education consisting of many schools increases the quality of education (Hancock, 2011). Other structural problems of our education system are that the schools do not have the necessary technological equipment, and the in-service training that would increase the quality of the teaching profession is insufficient, and the teachers cannot renew themselves. On the other hand, education for fields and professions is now provided only in higher education

institutions, acquiring a profession is equated with graduation from higher education institutions, the chances of individuals studying in secondary education related to the same profession and field are decreasing and those who do not have access to higher education are excluded from social processes (Kavaklı, 2015:82).

According to educational psychology, education should develop the talents of each individual to the highest degree and this development should form the basis for the future success of the individual (Ergun, 1987:15). This is possible by discovering the psychological states, pedagogical orientations, capacities and opportunities of the individuals and preparing training programs in this direction. Ignoring all of these, trying to provide education to individuals with programs that have been predetermined and lost their flexibility and dynamism will cause students to alienate themselves and to social structures. The teacher, who is made the only active element in the education process according to predetermined regulations and curricula, is the only instructor who knows the truth and recognizes the concept of “good”. He/she tries to convey the information to the student by referring to the predetermined books and texts. The method chosen by the teacher as a way of transferring information to the passive student is memorization.\* Again, because of this authority figure, the imagination, dreams and desires, designs and judgments that individuals add to the spiritual world and the real world in which they grow are dominated by the power of human over human, superior and subordinate, commanding and obedience thoughts (Horkheimer, 2005:267). The criterion for success is the exam system based on the error-free repetition of what was memorized. The logic of success determined by the examination forces the institution called the school to transform into a consecration category in which permanent, mostly immutable differences are established between those who are selected and eliminated, in Pierre Bourdieu’s words, just as the acceptance ceremony of the nobility (Bourdieu, 2006:116). This traditional process prevents the development of the student’s personality, is insufficient in discovering his abilities, and the principle of “lifelong education” is not realized because the method followed is memorization. In the Turkish education system, which is devoid of practice and based entirely on rote, individuals cannot apply what they have learned to life outside of school and remain very unfamiliar with it.

According to Gestalt psychology, the whole is different and more than the sum of the parts. The basic working principles of the mind are wholeness, parallelism and self-regulation (Aydın, 2016:230). Pedagogically, children perceive the whole more easily. Therefore, there should be integrity between education programs and courses and applications should be complementary to each other. However, the Turkish education system constantly divides the course subjects into pieces and does not allow any relationship between these parts. Primary school, secondary school and high school programs combined with the compulsory education system do not have any integrity among themselves. As emphasized by Akçay, on the vertical axis, there is no conceptual integrity among each course from primary education to the last grade in basic education (Akçay, 2006:146). There are two consequences of this: Firstly, because this unity, which is not provided on the horizontal axis, prevents the mental schemas from working correctly, individuals will never

\* The word memorization is explained in the Turkish Language Association dictionary as “remembering in a way that can repeat a text or a word completely”. It is exemplified by the sentence: “We wouldn’t think about the meaning of what we said, thinking about what we memorized”. This example explains very well how memorization deactivates the mind. (See: <https://sozluk.gov.tr/?kelime=ezyber>)

reach the knowledge of the whole and will not develop well in terms of physical and spiritual aspects. Secondly, individuals' education that is fragmented rather than holistic education will result in specialization. All the information of the individuals trained outside of the whole, except for a single field, is filed and they can have sufficient knowledge in only one area. This creates a social order composed of one-dimensional people. The striking point in such societies is that they have the potential to become objects of any authority easily.\*

Another problem that has existed in Turkey in the field of education is that there are too much inequality between girls-boys, urban-rural areas and regions of the country (Akçay, 2006:188). Living in the village or in the city is what distinguishes the level of access to the right to education in Turkey. This situation has many consequences. First, as educational opportunities are more in cities, migration from rural areas to metropolitan areas is accelerating. Schools are getting crowded in big cities whose population increases with migration and the technical equipment of the schools remains insufficient to meet the needs. On the other hand, people of villages and provinces who have adaptation problems in compliance with the requirements of the city find themselves in an environment of chaos and carry the living conditions they are accustomed to. This, in turn, further digs the wound of the "urbanization" created by the economic structure, and expands the volume of many negativities such as ghettoization and infrastructure problems (Gültekin, 2019:257). There are no deep gaps between the urban and the rural areas in terms of education quality in developed countries; but this differentiation is much sharper in developing countries such as Turkey. There are no teachers in many villages, and the teachers appointed to some villages resign after a short while. For improvement or sustainable development, for the recovery of the economy and the formation of a free and peaceful society, special projects should be developed by the public and private sector to eliminate inequalities.

There are socio-cultural inequalities between students who do not have pre-school education opportunities, who cannot benefit from education investments, and who struggle to study in villages due to the lack of tools and equipment (Avşaroğlu, 1970:26). In order for people living in rural areas not to leave the regions they live in and to become educated, cultured and qualified people, the necessary education and job opportunities should be brought to them, and new agricultural techniques, industries or crafts should be taught to these people.

Qualified workforce is indispensable for a productive economy. The way to have a qualified workforce is possible with well-planned vocational education. Vocational and technical education is of vital importance for developing economies in this respect. Turkey cannot find skilled labor to employ in emerging industries. The reason for this trouble is the problems faced by the Turkish vocational and technical education system at both secondary and higher education levels (Şahin & Fındık, 2008:3). The aim of vocational and technical education is to educate and train individuals as a qualified workforce for employment in industry, trade and service sectors, and to provide them with the basic education necessary for transition to higher education institutions that are the continuation of their profession. The employment problem triggered by the economic development in Turkey caused a decrease in the interest in technical education. In Turkey, not individual talent, but family's demands and environmental factors are determinants of the vocational guidance. The problem of vocational education, which is one of the main problems of the Turkish education

\* For the concept of unidimensionality, see: Marcuse, 1997.

system, causes the problem of “idleness”.<sup>\*</sup> The fact that vocational education starts in high schools and it is disadvantaged against universities causes families not to direct their children to vocational schools. Interest in general high schools and other secondary education institutions is thus increasing. However, due to the fact that the education here is abstract and lacks experimentation and practice, the students who graduate from here cannot have any profession, create an unqualified workforce and form masses in front of the university gates. Turkey, to meet changing technological needs, to keep pace with the changes brought about by time and solve the employment problem must create a more flexible infrastructure; vocational training and vocational training should start from primary school.

### CONCLUSION

Unfortunately, since the establishment of the education system in Turkey, although there were very good experiments, those has not been pursued in any way; moreover, the bad aspects of good practices were focused on and these applications were removed altogether instead of being updated or corrected; therefore, the current education system, which was created completely against human nature, has gradually moved away from applying modern principles of education and being scientific. The practice has been abandoned and the necessary importance has not been given to vocational training. Inequalities in access to educational opportunities between regions could not be eliminated, qualified work force could not be trained and Turkish society became one-dimensional due to this fragmented education system. Abstract information could not be applied to practice, education was not perceived as a part of life. All these negativities have created individuals who are inadequate in the cultural and intellectual field, lacking the potential to operate in development and economic growth. Therefore, these conventional methods in Turkey should first be abandoned; instead, the dialectical education method, in which the learner can actively participate in the education process and use his/her creative intelligence, should be preferred. Individuals can only avoid being commodified and mechanized in this way, use their minds and produce creative ideas in line with their interests.

In addition to these, the Turkish education system contains many other problems as shown in part 3. For instance, it cannot provide lifelong learning. Most of the students who finish primary education move away from their educational life and forget all their knowledge because they did not “work for it” during their education. Mentorship and guidance are insufficient, students are not guided in line with their abilities, and their personal inclinations and opportunities are ignored. Students who are brought up in a national education system full of infrastructural deficiencies also cannot meet the needs in terms of quality. Extremely bureaucratic and anti-democratic educational practices are essential in all educational institutions from pre-school to higher education. Apart from teachers or other authority figures, students are not included in the education process, and they cannot express their opinions in decisions that concern them. However, in educational institutions that aim to train members of a democratic society, the education process should not be implemented within the framework of strict rules, and the student should be included. The basic principle should be “mutual learning”, not education. The training process should take place among all members of the educational institution.

<sup>\*</sup> For detailed information, see: Türkoğlu, 2007.

From this point on, what needs to be done is to reconsider today's unfounded education system and to develop a versatile one. This multi-faceted education system should take the model of Village Institutes, which were educational institutions built by İsmail Hakkı Tonguç and were ahead of their time in many ways. Today, shown as an epitome of educational models by UNESCO, and considering that they were born in Anatolia, the Village Institutes should be adapted to today's needs and the *zeitgeist*, and should be considered for use as basic practical training units. The traditional method of rote memorization that prevents creative thinking in schools should be abandoned, instead, education programs should be able to apply real and creative thinking together, as in the Institutes - where education was carried out more effectively because the way of learning in person, by living, learning in the workplace. Education should not be one-sided, but should aim for multi-directional development. It must nourish both body, spirit and mind. Curricula, as in institutes, should include sporting events along with artistic activities; developing bodily and mental abilities must be combined with productive work. It should not be forgotten that education cannot be considered as independent of environmental conditions, and educators should benefit from the physical and social environment. Today, there are many educational institutions established for millions of people who migrate from rural areas to the city to benefit from the educational opportunities of big cities: Public Education Centers, Maturation Institutes, Vocational Training Centers, etc. However, they are not able to achieve permanent success, because they have not been able to approach individuals who migrate from the countryside and form suburbs outside the city, and are located in the center of the city.

Village Institutes started out as a well-intentioned practice, but it has been the subject of many criticisms and discussions due to the problems arising from the political climate of the time and the ineptitudes of practitioners in the field. It is an undeniable fact that Village Institutes, which were a "Turkish type" education practice with their sins and good deeds, achieved a certain level of success in their educational output despite all negative aspects and criticisms of these negative aspects from the public and political authorities. Therefore, Village Institutes today have the potential to offer a successful educational output, if the negative aspects are removed and reconstructed in a way that does not alienate the Anatolian people. In this respect, Village Institutes are not just an exceptional anecdote on the pages of the Turkish education history, but a system infrastructure that has the potential to be studied and developed.

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