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**A 'LANGUAGE' OF MODERNIZATION: CULTURE AND ART EDUCATION
IN THE VILLAGE INSTITUTES**

Mete Kaan KAYNAR¹ & Gökhan AK²

ABSTRACT

The Village Institutes were originally-designed in-place-training institutions of the Turkish education history. They had been a very significant and unique educational-product of Turkey which were gifted to all secular [modern] world education systems. Because these Institutes were explored in line with thoroughly native considerations and foresights. Thus the Institutes punched their latter-day principles and values not only in the Turkish, but also in many contemporary world education systems. Although the Institutes were shut down by some reactionary political approaches, their impacts, educational power and pedagogic wealth had reached until today. The main reason for that could be defined with various aspects. First of all, these institutions had adopted an unique educational model which was directly based on the universal science, culture and fine arts. This approach ensured authentic innovative styles for students of the Institutes, not only in the village field, but also in every educational level. Thus it should be emphasized that one of the most important aspects with this innovative education method was that the Village Institutes were conceived with a 'revolutionary' and 'enlightenment' understanding. This noteworthy aspect was what made them unique at first. Thus the aim of this research will firstly become to analyze educational model and system of the Village Institutes stemming from their unique, native, humanist and secular educational methods; and secondly explore how much innovative the Village Institutes were in the fields of science, culture and art. This study is based on the hypothesis-deduction method. Thus findings method for the study will follow a from-general-to-specific case approach. In this study, literature review and content analysis research methods will mainly be used.

Key Words: The Village Institutes, Education, Modernization, Enlightenment, Culture and Art.

1. Introduction

The Turkish Village Institutes (TVI) was originally-designed in-place-training institutions of the Turkish education history. They had been a very significant and unique educational-product of Turkey which was gifted to all secular [modern] world education systems. Because these Institutes were explored in line with thoroughly native considerations and foresights. Thus the Institutes punched their latter-day principles and values not only in the Turkish, but also in many contemporary world education systems. Although the Institutes were closed down by some reactionary political approaches, their impacts, educational power and pedagogic wealth had reached until today. The main reason for that could be defined with various aspects. First of all, these institutions had adopted a unique educational model which was directly based on the universal science, culture and fine arts. This approach ensured authentic innovative styles for students of the Institutes, not only in the village field, but also in every educational level. Thus it

¹ Assoc. Prof., Hacettepe University, metekaankaynar@gmail.com.

² Assist. Prof., Nişantaşı University, gak2081@yahoo.co.uk.

should be emphasized that one of the most important aspects with this innovative education method was that the TVI were conceived with a 'revolutionary' and 'enlightenment' understanding. This noteworthy aspect was what made them unique at first. This study is based on the hypothesis-deduction method. Thus findings method for the study will follow a from-general-to-specific case approach. In this study, literature review and content analysis research methods will mainly be used.

2. Motivations and Factors that Affected Foundation of the TVIs

The TVIs in the Turkish educational system represented an innovative approach to expanding opportunities for learning, but that they had come to an abrupt end in the late 1940's. The Institutes were created to meet a serious educational need. In 1928 (the year of the introduction of the Latin script in Turkey), 82.5 per cent of men and 95.2 per cent of women were illiterate. For 13.6 million people, there were only 4,894 elementary schools and most of those were in the towns, not the villages where most of the people lived (Vexliard and Aytaç, 1964: 41). Between 1939 and 1946, twenty-one co-educational boarding schools were built to prepare primary school teachers. Much of the construction work was performed by pupils and teachers. Youth of both sexes, aged twelve to sixteen, who had completed a five-year village primary school, qualified for admission. Their education was free following a pledge to teach in an assigned village for twenty years after graduation.

The duties of the new teachers included: (1) primary education based on universal modern education principles; (2) adult education in the villages based on universal modern education principles; (3) raising the cultural level of the villages through the distribution of books, educational programs, radio, and vocal, dance, instrumental music education, and many sorts of fine arts; (4) promoting progressive agricultural techniques in the fields, the orchards, and kitchen gardens; the raising of livestock; rural handicrafts such as ironwork, carpentry, leather work, mechanics, and electricity; (5) instruction for adults in child-raising, housekeeping, needlework; (6) the creation and development of rural cooperatives.

The graduates of the Institutes were to return to their villages as leaders and reformers. Teachers, students, and villagers in general were to learn practical skills, mostly related to their agricultural economy, new tools for life, and general education. The Institute approach embodied ideas of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, John Dewey, and others such as integrating theory and practice, focusing on the underserved, working across institutions, and a systemic approach to building a stronger society. Classical, but modern and universal educational approaches were to be combined with practical abilities and applied to local needs.

The Institutes had a major impact, and many people regret that they were shut down. But there was resistance against this secular, modern, enlightened, and mixed education. Some feared that it would educate 'the communists of tomorrow,' a damning statement during the Cold War. Traditionalists questioned the coeducational and secular aspects. Powerful landlords did not appreciate the goal of educating children who could ask "Why?" questions. There were also

questions about the organization and preparation of the teachers. By 1953 the Village Institutes had been completely shut down (Anonim, 2010).

2.1 A Brief Historical Background Regarding Development of the TVIs

The Village Institutes were an educational attempt realized in Turkey between 1937 and the mid-1940s to transform Turkish countryside. That being the case, there were a lot of expectations coming from all over the country related to this foundation. Some of them were about modernizing social relations, bringing end to poverty and ignorance, creating peasant intellectuals, to increase agricultural productivity, and to spread Kemalist Revolution in the countryside (Karaömerlioğlu, 1998: 47). The Village Institutes of Turkey created an education reality in the Turkish Education History and provided the insight which lead many people into the study of "Social Work" and researching the human condition.

The Institutes were a group of schools founded according to the law dated 17 April 1940 in order to train the teachers. These schools are totally unique to Turkey and this project was led by Hasan Ali Yücel who was the minister of education at the time. They were the cornerstones of the rural development project. At the time there weren't any schools in most of the villages. Village Institutes were established to meet the needs of the teachers for each village. Despite their short life, they highly increased the number of primary schools in the country. They had strong support from the Prime Minister İsmet İnönü and the director general of primary education İsmail Hakkı Tonguç.

Until recent times, and even today, many people who knew about the Institutes made strong statements about their modernist approach, valuable contributions, and enlightened approaches and implementations. Thus, many Turkish intellectuals and those who admired the Village Institutes robustly decried their closing. Because many intellectuals and folks in Turkey believed so far that the Institutes were Turkey's future! And that future was somehow destroyed...

However, some others were more reserved, but still felt that a crucial opportunity had been lost. There are estimates of major losses for Turkey in terms of general literacy and economic development still being felt today because of the closings. It appears that the TVI demonstrated a successful model for education that could be applied anywhere after suitable adjustment for local needs. We may today have many questions related to the TVI. Perhaps most importantly, could or should the Institutes be revived? Or, are there principles we can derive from them that would be valuable for the more urban populations of today? Because we strongly emphasize that the Institutes were the unique centers of Anatolian enlightenment. The reason lying behind this claim which we can easily explain is that the Institutes depicted an unexampled educational system and method for those rural children by adopting not only primary education needs, but also courses of various cultural and fine arts activities ranging from theatre, literature, sculpture to instrumental music education. Thus they were really unmatched centers of science, culture and fine arts for those whole poverty-stricken, illiterate and deserted villages resided all across arid Anatolian

steppe. Now we will discuss on how the Institutes were the centers of the Anatolian Revival and Enlightenment in Turkey of the mid-20th century.

2.2 Why is there a Relation between the Enlightenment and Turkish Village Institutes?

Before delving into that crystal-clear relation, we should touch upon the concept of “Enlightenment” in the history. The Enlightenment (also known as the Age of Enlightenment or the Age of Reason) (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2016) was an intellectual movement which dominated the world of ideas in Europe in the 18th century (Roberson, 2016: 246). The Enlightenment included a range of ideas centered on reason as the primary source of authority and legitimacy, and came to advance ideals like liberty, progress, tolerance, fraternity, constitutional government, and separation of church and state (Outram, 2006: 29; Zafirovski, 2010: 144). The Enlightenment was marked by an emphasis on the scientific method and reductionism along with increased questioning of religious orthodoxy -an attitude captured by the phrase “Sapere aude”, that is to say, “Dare to know” (Gay, 1996). The Age of Enlightenment was preceded by and closely associated with the scientific revolution (Cohen, 1982: 41). There are two main distinct lines of Enlightenment thought: the moderate variety, following Descartes, Locke and Christian Wolff which sought accommodation between reform and the traditional systems of power and faith and the radical enlightenment, inspired by the philosophy of Spinoza, advocating democracy, individual liberty, freedom of expression, and eradication of religious authority (Israel, 2006: 15; 2010: vii-viii, 19). The moderate variety tended to be deistic whereas the radical tendency separated the basis of morality entirely from theology.

Science played an important role in Enlightenment discourse and thought. Many Enlightenment writers and thinkers had backgrounds in the sciences and associated scientific advancement with the overthrow of religion and traditional authority in favor of the development of free speech and thought (Lenman, 1993). Broadly speaking, Enlightenment science greatly valued empiricism and rational thought, and was embedded with the Enlightenment ideal of advancement and progress. The study of science, under the heading of natural philosophy, was divided into physics and a conglomerate grouping of chemistry and natural history, which included anatomy, biology, geology, mineralogy, and zoology (Porter, 2000: 79-80). As with most Enlightenment views, the benefits of science were seen universally (Burns, 2003: entry, 7, 103).

Science during the Enlightenment was dominated by scientific societies and academies, which had largely replaced universities as centers of scientific research and development. Societies and academies were also the backbone of the maturation of the scientific profession. The influence of science also began appearing more commonly in poetry and literature during the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment has long been hailed as the foundation of modern Western political and intellectual culture (Brewer, 2008: 1). The Enlightenment brought political modernization to the West, in terms of introducing democratic values and institutions and the creation of modern, liberal democracies. In contrast to the intellectual historiographical approach of the Enlightenment, which examines the various currents or discourses of intellectual thought within the European

context during the 17th and 18th centuries, the cultural (or social) approach examines the changes that occurred in European society and culture. This approach studies the process of changing sociability and cultural practices during the Enlightenment.

One of the primary elements of the culture of the Enlightenment was the rise of the public sphere, a “realm of communication marked by new arenas of debate, more open and accessible forms of urban public space and sociability, and an explosion of print culture,” in the late 17th century and 18th century (Melton, 2001: 4). Elements of the public sphere included: it was egalitarian, it discussed the domain of “common concern,” and argument was founded on reason (Habermas, 1989: 36-37).

Because of the focus on reason over superstition, the Enlightenment cultivated the arts as well (Beard and Gloag, 2005: 58). Emphasis on learning, art and music became more widespread, especially with the growing middle class. Areas of study such as literature, philosophy, science, and the fine arts increasingly explored subject matter that the general public in addition to the previously more segregated professionals and patrons could relate to (Burkholder et al, 2006: 475). As musicians depended more and more on public support, public concerts became increasingly popular and helped supplement performers’ and composers’ incomes. The concerts also helped them to reach a wider audience. Handel, for example, epitomized this with his highly public musical activities in London. He gained considerable fame there with performances of his operas and oratorios. The music of Haydn and Mozart, with their Viennese Classical styles, are usually regarded as being the most in line with the Enlightenment ideals (Beard and Gloag, 2005: 59).

The debating societies are an example of the public sphere during the Enlightenment (Andrew, 1996). Their origins include: (1) clubs of fifty or more men who, at the beginning of the 18th century, met in pubs to discuss religious issues and affairs of state; (2) mooted clubs, set up by law students to practice rhetoric; (3) spouting clubs, established to help actors train for theatrical roles; (4) John Henley’s Oratory, which mixed outrageous sermons with even more absurd questions, like “Whether Scotland be anywhere in the world?” (Andrew, 1996: 406)

The debating societies discussed an extremely wide range of topics. Before the Enlightenment, most intellectual debates revolved around “confessional” -that is, Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed (Calvinist), or Anglican issues, and the main aim of these debates was to establish which bloc of faith ought to have the “monopoly of truth and a God-given title to authority” (Israel, 2001: 4).

In addition to debates on religion, societies discussed issues such as politics and the role of women. It is important to note, however, that the critical subject matter of these debates did not necessarily translate into opposition to the government. In other words, the results of the debate quite frequently upheld the status quo (Andrew, 1996: 412-415). From a historical standpoint, one of the most important features of the debating society was their openness to the public; women attended and even participated in almost every debating society, which were likewise open to all classes providing they could pay the entrance fee. Once inside, spectators were able to participate in a largely egalitarian form of sociability that helped spread Enlightenment ideas (Andrew, 1996: 422).

Nearly all of these values stemming from the “Age of Enlightenment” were being conducted as main educational items and aspects in the TVI. Then, now we should analyze the foundation, general characteristics and nature of the courses performed in the Village Institutes.

3. Foundations, General Characteristics and Courses of the TVIs

The purposes of the TVI are quite important at this point to signify clearly. The basic aim of the emerging western educational system of the Republic, regardless of type of school or the level of education, were to teach fundamental principles of the Republic and at least to make people support them. The reason to this was that, at that time, strong education institutions were century’s struggle for modernity and westernization. Therefore, the principles of the Republic were taught at institutions to produce generations for the new Republic. İsmail Hakkı Tonguç, the founder of the Village Institutes, emphasized that: “...the revolution has to make its ideal to be adopted by people in Anatolia who is intellectual and young, and at the same time it has to raise its own generation”. In this sense, village institutes were not merely educational institutions, they were also projects of raising a generation who would be new leaders and intellectuals loyal to the Republic of tomorrow (Arslan and Özü, 2011: 3).

In a developing country like Turkey, village institutes were also seen as a good starting point for further development. In this respect, the main aims and principles of village institutes were primarily arisen from: (1) the potential of Turkish society who was generally living in villages, and (2) the idea of developing new methods and machines of agriculture to strengthen that potential. The students in these institutes were educated and taught in three fields: in culture, art, social sciences and economy. On the other hand, teachers were expected not only to teach the lesson and leave, but also raise clever, sophisticated, and creative supporters of the Republic.

Students were selected among the most successful students in the villages and after taking education they went back to these villages to work as teachers because for the other people educated at the other teacher training schools, going to a village and being teachers those places are seen as obligatory works. However, the rate of literacy was as low as 5% in the early times of the Turkish Republic and the 80% of the total population were living in the villages.

Beginning in 1940, the village institutes started to be founded in the fields which are cultivable. In these schools founded at 21 different regions of Turkey, the teachers would teach villagers both how to read and write and modern agriculture methods. Instead of education based on just books, they taught people by practicing things in the right place. With this purpose, all the schools had their own fields, farms, workshops and animals. Until its closure, a lot of fields became useful for agriculture and the production in these fields increased. A great number of warehouses, new roads and buildings were built by the people educating at these schools. Until 1954 when they were closed, 1.308 women and 15.943 men, namely totally 17.251 people were educated as teachers.

The schools were built near the cultivable fields because one of the aims of these institutes is to teach people the new methods for agriculture. The education in village institutes included both practical (agriculture, construction, arts and crafts etc.) and classical (mathematics, science, literature, history etc.) courses. A teacher graduated from these institutes is not only a primary school teacher but also has some practical knowledge about many areas such as apiculture, fisheries, carpentry...etc. Even the buildings for these schools were built by the teachers sent there with the help of the villagers. Their daily routine included morning gymnastics, reading hours and farming. Each student has to read 25 books for each year and learn how to play a musical instrument. They also had weekly meetings in which students can freely criticize teachers and school administration. These institutes became good and rare examples of learning by doing and from this aspect they became the subjects for many studies (Wikipedia, 2017).

Turkish Village Institutes (TVI) was a multi-dimensional and multi-purpose project. First and foremost, TVI promised to educate village youth in the secular values of the Turkish nation (Korur, 2002). Secular education should be understood to imply that education should be free from all kinds of religious influence and superstitions (Arayıcı, 1999: 267-280). It was not just a theory and practice, where students not only had the classical lessons like literature, math and science, but a heavy load of practical ones like agriculture, construction and farming, skills necessary for village life. The idea was for the teachers to be able to sustain the whole system, including building the schools (Güler, 2013: 3).

The ministry of education intentionally located the institutes in rural areas, so that students could practice farming, plant orchards, develop water and sanitation systems, and generally confront typical village problems with modern skills and science (Stone, 1974: 419-429). Children trained in Village Institutes were tried to be emancipated from the scholastic. Their culture is not the knowledge memorized; it is the general and pure knowledge learned through work at work (Özsoy, 2009: 270). Youths of both sexes between the ages of twelve and sixteen who were graduated by a five-year village primary school were qualified for admission to a village institute. The government offered this education free to students who pledged to teach in an assigned village for twenty years after graduation.

The curriculum of the Village Institutes took into consideration, and was responsive to, the local conditions and needs; emphasis was placed on the unity of general and vocational knowledge in their curriculum. Fifty percent of the Institutes' curriculum was devoted to "culture classes." The remaining fifty percent was divided into two. While twenty-five percent of the curriculum was reserved for agriculture classes, the remaining twenty-five consisted of technical classes. Each institute had autonomy in defining their weekly, monthly, yearly programs in accordance to their needs (Özsoy, 2009: 249-278). The Institutes were established in villages; because an overwhelming majority of the population (more than 80 %) was, at that time, living in the villages. Second, the city had no real connection with the realities of the country, and the city schools, according to Tonguç, did not overlap with the realities of life. Third, the village life, Tonguç argued, comprised the elements of the true community life- of mutual help and friendly cooperation. The Institutes were

to be built upon, and make use of, these traditional collaborative relations called “imece.” (Özsoy, 2009: 275).

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 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; but more importantly, a creative, productive and non-parrot-fashion education model were the key elements of the Village Institutes training system. 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 (Görgün Baran, 2012: 85).

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 endeavors of the Republican education reforms (Gül, 2014: 1-12).

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 an entirety.”

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

labor 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 labor 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 joyful- 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 (Ak, 2016: 115-139).

Art of theatre in the Institutes had been another important and often-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 Hasanoglan 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 adapted 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.”

4. Conclusion

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 rumors 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.”

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 adaptation 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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