

## Rural Revitalization and the Village Institutes Experience in Turkey (1940-1954)

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### Abstract

This research evaluate on the Village Institutes experience in Turkey from the early 1940s to the 1950s. There is now a new interest in the organization and functioning of the "Village Institutes" which were in operation in Turkey. This study purpose is to describe how the Village Institutes were created, how they were organized and functioned, and what were the results of this experiment partly built on the precedent of the urban normal schools. Finally, a new theoretical interpretation is offered within a critique of existing, widely-held explanations that have dominated the theoretical literature on the issue for so long.

**Keywords:** The Village Institutes, Turkey, İsmail Hakkı Tonguç, Rural Development.

### Introduction

After Turkish National Movement, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk transformed the core of the last great empire into a modern state. The Turkish Revolution of the 1920's and 1930's may well be considered the most wonderful revolution of modern periods. In that time, Turkish intellectuals were awakened to the problems of rural Anatolia experiences. (Makal, 2005: 52) As early as 1920 when Atatürk was thought merely a rebellious general. He started propagating the notion of a special educational program for the Turkish villages. (Stone, 1974: 419) In 1922 Atatürk asserted that the educational policy of the country must be the education of the peasant. At last, in 1923, the establishment of the Republic provided conditions in which a development of education might really be expected. (Verschoyle, 1950:60) Atatürk also indicated the need to place both primary and secondary education under the authority of the Ministry of Education. Between 1923 and 1933, the number of normal schools on elementary level, had risen from twenty to only twenty-five, and the total number of teachers from 4.8 thousand to nineteen thousand. Over 80 per cent of the population was, and is, contained in some 40.000 villages, 32.000 of which comprise under 400 people each, with less than 150 inhabitants in each of 16.000 villages. At that time there were in all about 3,200 primary schools, with 5.600 primary teachers. Thus, the ultimate goal must have appeared almost impossibly distant. (Verschoyle, 1950:60)

In that case, Turkish leaders have struggled with the problem of rural revitalization. After considerable debate, their concern led to a government-sponsored program of Village Institutes designed to improve the Anatolian peasant. Although in 1948 this program was abandoned by the ruling Republican People's Party, the debate over the value of the Village Institutes has continued. This article seeks to examine the debate organization and which has followed their demise. (Stone, 1974: 419)

### General Background of The Village Institutes

The establishment of the Republic procured conditions in which a development of education might really be expected. At last, in 1927, Out of a population of 14 million, only a little more than 1 million could read. Thus, the ultimate goal must have appeared almost impossibly distant.

In 1931, the third congress of the People's Party adopted an educational programme of eight points:

*The foundation stone of our educational policy is the removal of ignorance.*

*Our aim is to raise strong republican, patriotic, and worthy citizens.*

*Both the bodily and mental development of our children shall be inspired by our glorious history.*

*Education must equip the citizen for material success in life.*

*Education shall be nationalistic and patriotic, free from all superstition and foreign ideas.*

*Sympathetic care of the pupil shall be united with firm discipline and moral teaching.*

*Great importance shall be attached to Turkish history.*

*In every village there shall be a primary school, which shall include in its curriculum the teaching of hygiene and of appropriate agricultural and technical subjects. (Verschoyle, 1950: 60)*

Turkish intellectuals feel that such organizations could be helpful to those “new countries” which have to create from nothing the whole system of elementary education in regions which are dominantly rural. Especially, they were awakened to the problems of rural Anatolia experiences during World War I. (Öztürk, 1996: 125) Some of them were to modernize the social relations, to bring an end to poverty and ignorance among the peasants, to create peasant intellectuals, to increase agricultural productivity and to help spread the Kemalist Revolution in the countryside. (Karaömerlioğlu, 1998: 47) In addition, the overall economic conditions, particularly in agriculture, continued to deteriorate owing to the global negative effects of the Great Depression. (Thornburg, 1949:359)

At that time, it had not been for the poor financial structure mechanization might have been a solution to improve agricultural production. In 1936 Hakkı Tonguç, the Director General of Primary Education, was carrying out a tour of inspection in the province of Kayseri. (Verschoyle, 1950: 60-61) The Village Institutes embody an educational attempt made in Turkey between 1937 and the mid-1940s to transform the Turkish countryside. Two years later Hakkı Tonguç was ready to develop his scheme into the much more comprehensive design for training primary teachers, which is embodied in the village institutes. (Akyüz, 2001: 353-355) Officially, it began in 1940 although experimental studies started in 1937. The Institutes continued until early 1950s, but the original phase of the Village Institutes ended in 1946 with the withdrawal of Hasan Ali Yücel from the Ministry of Education and Hakkı Tonguç. A new interest in the organization and functioning of the “Village Institutes” which were in operation in Turkey between 1940 and 1950.

There were many expectations from these institutions for the development of rural Turkey. (Uzman, 2013: 197) The teacher's duties to the community come under two headings: his duty to the school itself, and his duty to village life. One of the secrets of success of the village institute system is that it was prepared especially to suit national needs, and not just copied from training methods employed in any other country, in the realization from the first that an entirely new type of teacher and a new method of training were alike necessary. (Kaya, 1984: 193) For many, it was their first contact with peasants. Some of them were to modernize the social relations, to bring an end to poverty and ignorance among the peasants, to create peasant intellectuals, to increase agricultural productivity and to help spread the Kemalist Revolution in the countryside. (Karaömerlioğlu, 1998: 47) Though there was a consensus in the beginning among the ruling circles as to what should be the goals of the Institutes, the actual historical experience turned out to be extremely controversial. The Village Institutes became one of the major foci of political and ideological debate in Turkey, especially in the 1950s and the early 1960s. (Szyliowicz, 1966: 272-273)

**Table 1. Number of Students per Primary School, Student, Teacher and Teacher in Primary Schools in Turkey (1923-1938)**

Teaching Period	Numbers of Schools	Number of Students (jalal)									Number of Teachers									Number of students per teacher		
		In Village			In State			Total			In Village			In State			Total					
		M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T			
1923-24	4894	-	-	-	-	-	-	273107	62554	341941	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9021	1217	10238	33
1924-25	5587	-	-	-	-	-	-	301381	88987	390368	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10480	3342	13822	28
1925-26	5975	-	-	-	-	-	-	313893	92895	406788	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10445	3864	14309	28
1926-27	5995	-	-	-	-	-	-	348978	86585	435563	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10864	3367	14231	31
1927-28	6043	-	-	-	-	-	-	325695	133969	461985	9553	3081	12634	1395	1165	2560	10948	4246	15194	30		
1928-29	6600	-	-	-	-	-	-	323260	154309	477669	9781	3322	13103	1372	1243	2615	11153	4565	15718	30		
1929-30	6542	-	-	-	-	-	-	308028	161043	469071	9526	3170	12696	1372	1240	2612	10898	4410	15308	31		
1930-31	6598	-	-	-	-	-	-	315072	174227	489299	10077	3489	13566	1427	1325	2752	11504	4810	16318	30		
1931-32	6713	-	-	-	-	-	-	335921	187690	523611	6393	728	7121	5417	4435	9852	11910	5163	16973	31		
1932-33	6778	203822	99155	302977	162203	102081	264384	366125	201236	567361	6171	710	6881	4269	3914	8183	10440	4624	15064	39		
1933-34	6383	213116	101001	314117	172131	104921	277052	385247	205922	591169	6042	787	6829	4278	4016	8294	10320	4803	15123	38		
1934-35	6402	238789	109117	347906	188009	111445	299454	426978	220562	647360	6096	828	6924	4120	4058	8178	10216	4886	15102	43		
1935-36	6275	254166	115159	369325	199962	118815	318777	454128	233974	688102	5997	894	6891	3999	4059	8058	9996	4953	14949	46		
1936-37	6202	264503	116147	380650	209217	124311	333528	473720	240458	714178	5967	919	6886	3838	4053	7891	9805	4972	14777	48		
1937-38	6700	287466	121315	408781	222483	133427	355910	509949	254742	764691	6615	1688	8303	3634	3604	7238	10483	5292	15775	48		

Source: (MEB Talim ve Terbiye Başkanlığı, 1987: 8).

### Institute Students

By 1935, when the number of primary schools had risen only to 5,000, with 7,000 teachers and 370,000 pupils, it had become clear that some entirely new method of educational expansion was necessary if the country were ever to be properly equipped with teachers and schools. (DİE, 1967: 32-35) Fortunately for Turkey, a man with the necessary organizing ability, drive, and personality was at hand to launch what was really a revolutionary scheme. This scheme is undoubtedly one of the most important developments in the country. Candidates for admission to the village institutes are chosen by examination from those who have completed the five-year course at a primary school in the area covered by the institute, the age limits being 12-16 years. (Tonguç, 1939: 1)

There were fourteen Institutes the first year, 18, in 1943, twenty in 1944, and 21 in 1948 until the Institutes were established.

**Table 2. Located production units in the countryside**

Name of the Institute / City	Establishment Years	Field of the Institute
1. Çifteler-Eskişehir	1937	Afyon, Kütahya, Uşak, Konya
2. Kızıllı-Izmir	1937	Manisa, Denizli, Aydın
3. Kepirtepe-Kırklareli (Lüleburgaz)	1938	Edirne, Tekirdağ
4. Gököy-Kastamonu	1939	Çankırı, Çorum, Zonguldak, Sinop
5. Düziçi-Adana (Haruniye)	1940	Maraş, Gaziantep
6. Arifiye-Kocaeli (Izmit)	1940	Bursa, Bilecik, İstanbul, Bolu
7. Aksu-Antalya	1940	Muğla, Mersin
8. Sav açtepe-Balıkesir	1940	Çanakkale
9. Gönen-Isparta	1940	Burdur
10. Cilavuz-Kars	1940	Artvin, Ağrı
11. Akçadağ-Malatya	1940	Tunceli-Elağz
12. Pazarören-Kayseri	1940	Yozgat, Kırşehir, Niğde
13. Akpınar-Samsun (Ladik)	1940	Amasya, Tokat
14. Beşikdüzü-Trabzon	1940	Ordu, Giresun, Gümüşhane, Rize
15. Hasanoğlan-Ankara	1941	Ankara, Çankırı
16. İvriz-Konya	1941	Nevşehir, Niğde
17. Pamukpınar-Sivas (Yıldızeli)	1941	Erzincan
18. Pulur-Erzurum	1942	Bingöl
19. Ortaklar-Aydın	1944	Denizli
20. Dicle-Diyarbakır (Ergani)	1944	Urfa, Mardin, Bitlis
21. Emis-Van	1948	Hakkâri

Source: (Türkoğlu, 2005:176-177)

In the early days of the institutes primary schools were very rare, and entrance was by nomination. The number of students enrolled (in parentheses the number of women included in the total) was 2,490 (235) in the first year.

**Table 3. Development of Institutes**

Lesson Period	Number of Institutes	Number of Teachers	Number of Students		Total	Number of Graduates	
			Male	Female		Teacher	Health Officer
1937-1938	2	12	128	-	128	-	-
1938-1939	3	25	325	16	341	-	-
1939-1940	4	40	1074	107	1181	-	-
1940-1941	14	234	4933	438	5371	-	-
1941-1942	17	294	6987	705	7692	103	-
1942-1943	18	354	8834	837	9671	254	-
1943-1944	18	368	11563	1276	12839	1911	-
1944-1945	20	487	12761	1475	14236	1797	221
1945-1946	20	505	13068	1396	14464	1460	252
1946-1947	20	547	12822	1336	14158	2089	228
1947-1948	20	642	11814	1078	12892	2162	336
1948-1949	21	209	11244	773	12017	2269	220
1949-1950	21	672	13251	721	13972	1741	91
1950-1951	21	597	13322	773	14095	1760	-
1951-1952	21	570	12647	706	13173	1795	-
Total						16894	

Source: (DİE, 1967: 32-35, 41,47).

As can be understood from the table, it is noteworthy that there is a steady increase in the number of students, both in the number of institutes opened and in the number of students, from the establishment process to the closing process of the institutes. The highest number was 14,236 between 1945-1946, and the lowest between 5371 in 1940. The number of diplomas awarded each year varied from a low of 103 to a high of 2,269 in 1948-1949. The total of diplomas given was 16,894. During the first five years the Institutes had built more than 300 buildings such as dormitories, refectories, kitchens, workshops, warehouses, garages, class-rooms, etc. They had installed electricity in sixteen of their twenty-one centers. By the time 1952, 21 institutes, 17,341 teachers, and 1348 health officers had graduated to the rural development as a graduate, through the institutes, with a remarkable progress in the schooling process and education-training struggle in the villages.

### The Curriculum

In the first three years (1940-1943) there was no definite curriculum in the Institutes. The teachers received only general instructions and some examples of programs in their specialty, but the details of the curriculum were left mostly to their initiative. The amount of time allotted to each branch per semester was 114 hours for general education; 58 hours for agriculture; and 58 hours for technology. After three years a detailed curriculum was elaborated assigning a specific number of hours per year for each subject. Given below is the total number of hours for the five years showing the relative importance attributed to the different subjects.(Kaya, 1984: 194) The old proportion was maintained for the three great branches: General Education (50 per cent); Agriculture (25 percent); Technology (25 percent). The following subjects were taught under General Education (Culture): Turkish, 736 hours in 5 years; History, 328; Geography, 236; Civil Education, 92; Mathematics, 598; Physics, 276; Chemistry, 184; Biology, 368; Foreign Language, 414; Penmanship, 92; Painting, 214; Physical Education and National Folklore, 184; Music-instrumental and vocal, 460; Military training, 368; Rural Economics and Cooperative Organization, 46. Greatest importance was allotted to Mathematics and Foreign Language among the variety of subjects in this curriculum.(Tonguç, 1947: 561-562) In Agriculture (with some local variants the following subjects were taught: field-work, industrial cultures, zootechnology aviculture, apiculture, silk worm culture, fishing and pisciculture. Also taught were technology: Iron work, wood work-masonry-mechanics, elements of electricity, and specialties for women in field and housework, child-rearing and others.(Vexliard and Aytaç, 1964:44-45)

### Education For Production

The main function of the village institute is to train the primary teacher. Hitherto the training course has covered five years, with a nominal 44-hour week and six weeks' holiday in the year, but it is now proposed to extend it to six years. Half of the working hours are spent on purely practical subjects, equally divided between agriculture and, for the boys, building,

carpentry, and blacksmithing; for the girls, spinning, weaving, tailoring, and sewing. The other half of the working hours are devoted to essential book knowledge: Turkish language, history, geography, and arithmetic. There is considerable elasticity in the programme in view of the seasonal nature of much of the work; and during each of the last two years of the course at least a month is spent on some simple research into aspects of village life. (Verschoyle, 1950: 62) An educational programme focusing on work, therefore, became an important objective, and the Village Institutes were set up to achieve this goal. While the principle of 'education for work', or 'education for production' became the main motivation, the method of 'learning by doing' accompanied it.(Kafadar, 1997: 305) In all the memoirs of the graduates of the Village Institutes and in all the institute publications, we see that the method of 'learning by doing' was one of the most highly emphasized principles. (Karaömerlioğlu, 1998:57) commanded priority. The need for a qualified labour force, particularly in the countryside, pressing. An educational programme focusing on work, therefore, became an important objective, and the Village Institutes were set up to achieve this goal.(Tonguç, 1944:1-2) This education system at that time produced than the public and private sectors could employ. More important, was that these graduates had not acquired the necessary practical skills the economic life of the country. (Kirby, 2012:58)

The teacher's duties to the community come under two headings: His duty to the school itself, and his duty to village life. Under the first heading, he is responsible for the lay-out and work of the farm and garden attached to the school; for all teaching, both indoors and outdoors; for the health of his pupils; and for a proper blending of new ideas with old traditions. Under the second heading, he is to take every possible part in village life. He must organize ceremonies on national holidays; run the school farm as a model farm; help to protect forests, where these exist; preserve and repair ancient buildings; promote sports; share in all rejoicing and in all mourning; fight against drink, gambling, and other vice; and, in sum, raise the level of village culture, not by preaching and mere advice, but by active co-operation. (Verschoyle, 1950: 61)

### Conclusions

It is now possible to suggest this conclusions. The Village Institutes operated from 1940-1941 to 1949-1950. In Turkey, the rural revitalization preceded the establishment of the Village Institutes. Among the advocates of the Village Institutes there is also considerable varia-tion. Some recall the era of the late 1930s and the early 1940s with nostalgia, but they admit that the noble experiment was aborted and cannot be re-initiated. Others take a more militant position. Not only do they support re-opening the Institutes, but they also insist that the entire Turkish school system ought to be thoroughly reformed in light of the Village Institute experience. So it is possible to conclude that Turkish education will continue to adhere to conventional patterns.

Alternative approaches to rural revitalization and national development might again make a major impact on the Turkish educational scene. we can say that the Village Institutes were truly an original Turkish creation. Yet it is not at all certain that the same solution would still be profitable now, twenty years later in the same country, when the pace of industrialization and urbanization is much more rapid. In that case, Village Institutes did supply a solution for a country dominantly rural which didn't expect overnight to shift into an era of industrial prosperity.

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