



Village Institutes from Past to Present Day and Ascertainment towards Future

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ABSTRACT

The process of planing future starts with the analysis of the past and 'today'. Moreover, accepting 'change itself' as basic data and supporting development which is based on 'the person' must be the antecedence for societal process.

Analysis, change and forming a person-centered perspective are required for planing education as a social institution and for educating teachers who is the most strategic factor of educational systems.

Village Institutes, as having a special place in practices of educating teachers in Turkish history, are teacher education institutes which have linked theory to practice and aimed at discovering the students' power of production and ability for creativeness. Furthermore, these institutes are the ones in which there is a philosophy of 'educating village children' as by this way the institutes are the pioneers of social development.

These institutes, which had been active between 1940-1954, were totally unique to Turkey and have been the center of debate by authorities about its being political rather than scientific from their time of establishment to their time of termination. The debates have not seemed to be finished even today.

However, by research it is clearly seen that these institutes are very important models for analysis of current issues and for planing the future. Moreover, some interesting educational practices were made both in Village Institutes and in villages in which teachers graduated from the institutes worked. This article aims at presenting the change-based perspective of Village Institutes, the unique teacher education centers, which considers global and national conditions. It is also aimed at chiming in how to benefit from this perspective in today's educational context.

1. Introduction

The world has been changing rapidly in many ways since the begining of industralization process. Depending on this, a need for a revision of institutional structures has emerged as well. It is an emergent must for education, which is also a social institution, to be framed paralell to these new personal and social needs. However, education is not only a factor to be revised; it is also a factor to control and shape the change itself in accordance with its nature.

Teachers, as the strategic components of the education process, are the most important factors in reaching the discussed purposes. As John Dewey states: "Education is as good as the educators". The attitudes and behaviours of teachers have direct impact on all inputs, espacially on those of children and on the course of the system. Teachers play a key role in process of education. These roles usually emerge as "an educator", as well as "a counsellor", "a job specialist", "a social leader", "a figure of authority", "a leader of family" or "a consultant". In consequence a teacher is much more than a person who is collectively termed "an educator".



This article basically aims at presenting Village Institutes which had been serving as “teacher education institutes” for village schools between 1940-1954 and which had to be shut for the reason that they had been the focal point of political debates after that time. Moreover, the article discusses how the experience got from the process can be conveyed to this day and tomorrow.

2. Basic Factors Leading to Foundation of Village Institutes

One of the political characteristics of Turkish Republic for educating teachers is that it had preferred to educate them in two ways till 1953. Till that time, the institutions for educating teachers for cities and villages had been separate. The need for the preference was that the teachers who had been born, grown up and had their education in cities did not want to work in villages, and that the ones who accepted to work there could not get on well with villagers because of the difference between their cultural characteristics.

It can be said that there are a few reasons for the onset of Village Institutes. One of these is the “First İzmir Congress of Economics”. The group of farmers participated in the congress presented the basic structure of Village Institutes. The farmers, who was aware of the fact that education was very important for a developing society, highlighted the importance of an applied modern education with little funds. According to their suggestion, it was needed to give fields of 5000 square meters, bee hives, chickens or cows to teachers who would work in villages, so that the teachers would make their students responsible for maintenance of these, by this way an applied education would be done and at the same time the earnings of teachers would be supplied from these incomes.

The second factor can be said to be Turkey’s invitation of John Dewey to Turkey in 1924. Dewey was one of the most important educational scientists and his views were effective in all western societies. The symbolic importance of Turkey’s this invitation deserved to be taken into consideration in the first years of Turkish Republic. Because it meant to be a declaration of the young republic that it adopted the way of modern western educational developments. The reports prepared by Dewey after his return to America were studies which suggested a shift for Turkish Republic to an education system which was applied.

“The Commission of Research for Rural Education” was founded by Reşit Galip who was the president of the board of education then, with the suggestion of Mustafa Kemal in 1933, and this commission was also an important factor on the way to Village Institutes. The important results of these research can be summarized as follows:

a. There had been no change in daily lives of many villages; reading and writing abilities in Turkish had been forgotten by villagers; old technologies of farming had been going on and primarily the basic principles of Turkish Republic were not supported even if teachers were sent to these villages for these purposes.

b. Whereas reading-writing in Turkish were known by villagers; modern ways of farming were used and basic principles of Turkish Republic were supported in other villages to which no teachers were sent for the same purposes. It was seen that these villages were the ones to which the corporals and sergeants returned after their education in army. As a result, this point took attention and it was thought that the easiest way to reach the aims was to charge people who had been from the villages and who “spoke the same language” with the villagers.. According to this report, it was needed that village teachers would stay in the villages, work there just like the villagers and share production with them; make a living there and start a family, and be a consultant for villagers by going on developing themselves/herselves.



3. The Purpose of Village Institutes

The basic dynamics and aims of apprehension of education after proclamation of the Republic, regardless of type of school or the level of education, were to teach the basic principles of the Republic and provide the needed environment to make people support these principles. Education institutions were accepted as the basic institutions of the century's struggle for modernity and the adoption of European practices. The principles of the Republic were to be taught at institutions of "the Republic" so that a generation of the new Republic would be produced. İsmail Hakkı Tonguç, the founder of village institutes, stressed his sensibility about the subject: "...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 context, village institutes were not only educational booms, but also projects of raising the generation who would be the new leaders and intellectuals of tomorrow.

In a country like Turkey, which was not yet industrialized, the idea that supported that villages were first to begin from, was another view that shaped the aims of village institutes. In this context, the aims and principles of village institutes were firstly to arouse the potential productivity of Turkish society who was mostly living in villages, and secondly to present and generalize the new methods and machines of agriculture. The students in these institutes were educated in multiways: in fields of culture, art, social sciences and economy. It was not only going to the class and teach the lesson that was expected from them; but also to raise clever, educated and productive supporters of the Republic.

4. Conclusion

Village Institutes, as being the most appropriate institutes for Turkish educational aims, are the effulgent pages of history of Turkish education. These institutes, which supply the needs of the new era, combine theory with application, provide students the environment for developing their ability for creation, development in multiways, productivity and solidarity as well as the environment to transfer their knowledge to village children..

The 21 institutes which were allocated within Turkish geography in balance, gave education in accordance to the conditions of the places they were founded in. For example, fishing was stuck out in institutes close to seas, on the other hand producing regional agriculture was taught in institutes in midland.

It is accepted generally that the expectations from educational systems change rapidly in this world we live in and that the expected benefits has to be flexible. To reanimate village institutes today does not mean to found institutes of education which are appropriate to the needs of the era. But, it is essential to accept those days' sensibility and modern view as our heritage. To conclude, village institutes are not only institutes of education but also of the ability to think appropriately to needs of the society.

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