

## EDUCATIONAL APPROACH IN THE VILLAGE INSTITUTES

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The beginning of the Village Institutes, whose law was promulgated on April 17, 1940, dates back to the Instructor Course opened in Mahmudiye in the Çifteler district of Eskişehir in 1936. The Instructor Course, which was very successful in the conditions of that day, was opened in 11 different provinces a year later. From 1937 onwards, Village Teacher Training Schools were opened in 4 Instructor Course campuses. On April 17, 1940, these four Village Teacher Training Schools were transformed into Village Institutes and the decision was made to open Village Institutes in 10 more provinces in order to “train useful personnel for the village”.

At the Republican People Party's 4th Congress in 1935, village education was the main topic on the agenda. As of this date, there were no schools in 35.000 of the 40.000 villages. The majority of existing schools had three-year programs and most of their teachers had not graduated from teacher training schools. While the proportion of school-age students reaching school in cities and towns was close to 80 percent, in villages it was only 15 percent. The Parliament established a commission to solve this problem and the commission prepares a report on village education.

During the Party's congress, Atatürk, the president of Republic of Turkey, appointed his comrade-in-arms Saffet Arıkan to the Ministry of National Education, which was then called the Ministry of Culture. Saffet Arıkan summoned to the Ministry İsmail Hakkı Tonguç who was the teacher in the Gazi Education Institute's Department of Painting and Crafts and also acting as Deputy Principal of the Institute and showed him the prepared report. Tonguç found this report illusory. Saffet Arıkan wanted him to write a report. During those days, Saffet Arıkan complained to Atatürk about village education. Atatürk told him, “Don't be sad, we can benefit from village children who are doing their military service as sergeants and corporals by giving them a few months of training, and we will call them instructors.”

Saffet Arıkan presents the report prepared by Tonguç to the Minister. Atatürk, İsmet İnönü and Saffet Arıkan review the report and agree on its implementation. In 1936, the first Instructor Course is opened in the village of Mahmudiye in Çifteler. One year later, more courses followed. Instructors were given a 4.5-month course. Instructors are asked to teach students up to the first three grades of primary school. By 1947, 8765 instructors had completed these courses and opened schools in seven thousand villages.

The first article of the Law No. 3083 on Village Institutes, which was passed by the Parliament on April 17, 1940, states that Village Institutes will be opened in places with suitable land in order to train personnel useful for the village. From this article, we understand that the main purpose of teacher training is to train 'personnel useful for the village'. In other words, the teacher trained in the institutes will return as “useful personnel” to the village where he/she was born and raised. This is what makes the Village Institutes unique. Institutes are not like other schools. That is why their name is not “school” but “institute”.

Theorist and founder of the Village Institutes, Director General of Primary Education, İsmail Hakkı Tonguç frequently emphasized in his report first that it was not possible to enter a village with one of the known school types and secondly that the education to be provided should be useful to the villagers. According to Tonguç, city children sent to villages to teach alphabet were trying to return to the city immediately because they were not accustomed to live in the villages.

However, it was possible to revive the village from within with students taken from the village and educated in the institutes within a time span of five years. The agricultural and technical knowledge would make students of village origin both producers and educators in the villages they are assigned to. The teacher, who would serve a producer, would lead the village in agriculture (farming), gardening, fruit growing, beekeeping, vegetable growing, animal husbandry, blacksmithing, construction, carpentry, etc.; he/she would show the villagers the way and methods. He/she would give them practical health information.

Tonguç wanted to send to the villages not only people whose profession was teaching, but also people with the professions the villages needed at that time. There were no carpenters, builders, blacksmiths, health workers... in the villages. For this reason, he applied the principle of “education and training in work, through work” in the institutes. In other words, work became a tool of education in the institutes.

### ***Work training in institutes***

In many institutes, education began with tents, and over the years, dormitories, dining halls, classrooms, apiaries, stables, barns, poultry houses... were built; vegetables and fruit trees were planted on thousands of acres of land. By 1946, most of the institutes, out of twenty in the total, were meeting their own needs and sharing their surplus with the surrounding villages. Depending on the soil and climate, dry and irrigated agriculture, fishing, sericulture and beekeeping were practiced in these institutions. Small and large cattle were raised. Fruit growing was common. There were no salaried employees in the institutes, except for the cooks and master instructors. All the work was done by the teachers and students: housework, sowing, planting, building, brick cutting, poultry farming, cattle farming, beekeeping, even mixing tarhana (traditional Anatolian soup), making noodles, boiling molasses, sewing bed linen, sheets, curtains, repairing torn clothes, drying fruits, winter preparations, fishing, making pickles, jam, cheese....

Of the 44 hours of weekly classes, 22 hours were devoted to cultural courses and the other 22 hours to agricultural and technical courses. Students in the first grade studied agricultural and technical courses together; from the second grade onwards, students were divided into groups such as blacksmithing, construction and carpentry. Girls were focused on poultry farming and household economy, while boys worked with them on general agricultural work.

Institutes did not close during the summer vacation like conventional schools. Each student had 45 days of annual leave. The school was open while the student was on vacation. The teaching period was five years after five years of primary education. Students took courses of Turkish, mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, zoology, history, geography, foreign languages, art, music, physical education and pedagogical courses (both theoretical and practical).

### ***Democratic Education***

The institutes provided boarding and mixed education. In those years, this was a revolution in education. Turkish education system was able to switch to mixed education in primary education in 1926, in secondary schools in 1927-1928, and in high schools in 1929-1930. In village institutes established in 20 rural areas, providing boarding and mixed education is a democratic education in itself. Moreover, the entrance exam for girls was not applied to boys in most cases. Students were divided into groups from the first grade onwards, and lessons and tasks were taught in groups. Students were given tasks and authority throughout the entire process. Each group was on duty for a week, and all cleaning and organization of the institution was carried out by this group. First and foremost, the teachers on duty, the school sentries of the week, the cluster heads and the other students together planned and executed all the work in the

dormitories, dining hall, classrooms, laboratories, apiary, barn, coop.... At the end of the week, after the flag ceremony on Saturdays or that evening, the weekly work was evaluated. In these evaluations, all students would criticize what was missing. The teachers and the school principal were also criticized. The meeting was chaired by a student elected by a vote. Students were not punished for their criticism; on the contrary, they were encouraged to criticize. Students were tried to be raised as community leaders.

Beating and bad behavior in institutes were prohibited by İsmail Hakkı Tonguç's circular. Tonguç wanted the circular he sent to be read to all students and to be written in each student's notebook. The student had the right to slap the teacher who slapped him. Failing a class was almost impossible. If the student was unable to teach, they would assign him to the institute and make him a driver or a master instructor.

Weekly work and lesson plans were made together with the students. Students actively participated in cultural, agricultural and technical classes in groups. Neither teacher nor administrator could assign students private work. This was strictly forbidden. Meals were eaten together; no food was sent home. Sick students were cared for in the school's infirmary, and the students in charge of the infirmary served as assistants to the health officer and doctor. Art, music and physical education were among the most important courses in the institutes. Students who could not play a musical instrument could not graduate. Every day, a thousand students would get up at the same time in the morning and do morning sports and play folk dances accompanied by a musical instrument: A thousand students would kneel on the ground and stand up at the same time.

The students of the Construction Group would go to the newly opened institutes for a collective work. Many of the buildings of the institutes opened after 1940 were constructed by collective labor. After completing construction of buildings, these students were taken on trips around the country as a reward. Students who visited our country's historical sites and cultural assets would teach the folk dances of their region to the students of the institutes they stayed in. In this way, a wonderful cultural exchange would take place.

Classes were held outside as long as the weather was suitable. Students would read books during free reading hours. It was anticipated that each student would read 24 books in an academic year. The 'World Classics' published by the Ministry of National Education were first read by students from the Village Institute. Each institute had a legendary library. The institutes aimed to train people who would work with both their heads and hands, or rather, who would work their heads and hands in harmony. This is what is aimed at with applied education within work. Work is not only the action or performance performed with power or machinery in the field or workshop. Preparation for experiments in the laboratory, preparation for lessons and homework in the classroom, and planning are also work. İsmail Hakkı Tonguç told administrators and teachers that the work you would engage should first come from the head: "Work is both the measure (criterion) and the architect of a person." Tonguç's aim was to train people who could revitalize the village they were assigned to from within. The teacher would both be an example and a leader for the village with his behavior and actions. This was not something an ordinary person could handle. If a person is equipped, he leads by example.

***Institute members were not ordinary teachers***

Graduates of the Village Institute planted trees in the villages where they were assigned. They

brought roads, water and electricity to the villages. They fought epidemics. Together with Village Health Officers, they worked to eradicate epidemics such as malaria, trachoma and tuberculosis. They taught villages modern agriculture and animal husbandry. Beekeeping, cheesemaking and fruit growing entered the villages through them. Most importantly, through the cooperatives they established in the villages where they worked, they organized the village and the peasants and tried to prevent the exploitation of the peasants.

The institute students also pioneered the teachers' organization that blossomed in the following years. The Teachers' Union of Turkey (TÖS) was founded under their leadership and leadership.

Village Institute teachers enabled the villagers to become citizens. They mediated their dealings with the state. Through them, the villagers met the State in a different way for the first time in history.

Village Institute graduates were pure patriots, devoted to Atatürk's Revolutions, at peace with the society and nature they lived in, productive, humane, and peaceful people...

These institutions, which trained 17 thousand teachers, nearly nine thousand trainers, and one thousand five hundred and ninety nine health officers, were unfortunately transformed into teacher training schools in 1953 after their programs were changed in their infancy in late 1946 and they were diverted from their original purpose.

Training 'useful personnel for the village' was not in the interest of "some" people. According to them a teacher should have taught alphabet and should not have been involved in anything else. In particular, they should not have taken part in 'reviving the village from within'.

Welcome back, blackboard and chalk teaching(!) This is what was done... Today, we are paying the penalty of the wrong practices that were carried out in those days as a nation.