

Unfinished song in teacher education: The Village Institutes experience in Turkey

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Abstract

There was a successful and valuable experience that was implemented in Turkey between 1940 and 1954. It was called the Village Institutes which were established in different parts of the country that greatly enlightened their environments. Unfortunately, because of a clash of political interests, the institutes were closed in 1954. The Village Institutes have been under scrutiny in terms of different courses and activities. However, there still seems to be a gap in the reviewed literature in terms of foreign language teaching in the Village Institutes and its reflections to today’s English language teacher training programmes. Although Turkey is not the same as the 1940s Turkey, this paper is an attempt to show that with their certain features, they still stand as a model to look up to and we should benefit from their outputs in teacher education practices in Turkey. They raised teachers who were aware of themselves, the surrounding environment and their own transformative power and were able to think critically. When we consider the limited practicum hours for pre-service teachers and high ratio of theoretical lessons in the curriculum at the faculties of education, it seems that we have a lot to learn from the Village Institutes experience.

Keywords: The Village Institutes, teachers, enlightenment, teacher education, foreign language teaching

Öğretmen eğitiminde yarım kalan şarkı: Türkiye’de Köy Enstitüleri deneyimi

Özet

Türkiye’de 1940-1954 yılları arasında uygulanan başarılı ve değerli bir deneyim vardı. Köy Enstitüleri olarak adlandırılan bu okullar, ülkenin farklı bölgelerinde çevrelerini büyük ölçüde aydınlatmışlardır. Maalesef, bazı siyasi çekişmelerden ötürü 1954’te kapatılmışlardır. Köy Enstitüleri, verilen dersler ve etkinlikler bağlamında literatürde incelenmiştir, ancak Köy Enstitüleri özelinde verilen yabancı dil eğitimi ve bunun günümüz İngiliz Dili Eğitimi programlarına yansımaları açısından bir boşluğun olduğu da görülmektedir. Türkiye, 1940’lı yıllardan şu anda farklı olsa da bu çalışmanın amacı Köy Enstitüleri’nin bazı özellikleriyle hâlâ imrenilen bir model olduğunu ve çıktılarında Türkiye’deki öğretmen yetiştirme uygulamalarında faydalanabileceğini göstermektir. Kendilerinin, çevrelerinin, dönüştürücü güçlerinin farkında olan ve eleştirel düşünebilen öğretmenler yetiştirmişlerdir. Günümüzde aday öğretmenlere tanınan sınırlı staj imkânını ve Eğitim Fakülteleri’nin programlarındaki ağırlıklı olarak verilen teorik dersleri göz önünde bulundurunca, Köy Enstitüleri deneyiminden öğreneceğimiz çok şey olduğu ortaya çıkmaktadır.

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Anahtar kelimeler: Köy Enstitüleri, öğretmenler, aydınlanma, öğretmen yetiştirme, yabancı dil eğitimi

Introduction

The world has turned its eyes to the top PISA (The Programme for International Student Assessment) test scorer countries since the beginning of the twentieth century. Programme planners and curriculum developers are trying to find the miracle behind their success. In Turkey, we are also impressed with those education models and we have been reading articles and books how top scorer countries, which ranked high in PISA test, established their education systems. We are trying to learn more about teacher education models in Finland, Singapore, Australia, Canada and so on as the quality of teachers is one of the significant factors that influence student learning and success. However, we do not need to search the miracle in faraway places. We have the Village Institutes experience in our history that still stands as an exemplary model to the whole world. Those were the schools where students were reading the classics, in the halls of which one could hear the musical instruments that students were playing. They were the schools where students were showing theatrical performances on the stage, every brick and stone of which they had carried and built themselves. They were the schools where students were learning how to repair things, grow plants and trees, bake their own bread, knit and sew and even produce their own electricity and all these took place in the 1940s' Turkey and turbulent atmosphere of the World War II in Europe. It may seem like a dream that is unbelievably beautiful in its own way.

Under the leadership of İsmail Hakkı Tonguç (the General Director of Elementary Education), this dream became an educational revolution during the Ministry of Hasan Âli Yücel. Firstly, two "Trial Village Schools" were opened in İzmir-Kızılcıllu and Eskişehir- Çifteler in 1937 and 1938 (Altunya, 1990). Then, the Village Institutes were established by the Ministry of National Education on April 17th in 1940 to train teachers whose duties would be both teaching children and adults in the villages they had come from (Oğuzkan, 1990). As Küçüktaamer and Uzunboylu (2015) underpin, the Institutes were established to solve the teacher deficiency in rural areas. They were called as "institutes" as they wanted to show that education in the rurals was taken seriously (Başaran, 1990b). They were original Turkish creation. However, it should be borne in mind that many educational reformers such as Johann Pestalozzi (1746-1827), Georg Kerschensteiner (1854-1932), and John Dewey (1859-1952) influenced their foundation (Giorgetti, 2009). Yet Kirby (1962) emphasizes that they were not the imitations of those lines of thought but a unique model. Tonguç believed that students should learn by doing at schools, so in line with his view, Küçüktaamer and Uzunboylu (2015) underpin that

the Village Institutes were designed as educational institutions where vocational training was emphasized and students were able to learn what would be useful in the village or in a rural environment, with the opportunities of practice (p. 395).

Teaching was not confined to literacy education. Another aim was to train peasants in the villages. There were art and crafts classes "to nurture the creativity, individuality, and participation of students, and to sustain this cultural development in their villages as teachers" (Küçüktaamer and Uzunboylu, 2015, p. 395). Students were equipped with these ideas in mind. Students became teachers after their five years of education and went back to their villages to work there for twenty years (Kaynar and Ak, 2017). Some of the equipment were given by the state and they were supposed to cultivate the land given to them and earn their living (Kıral, 2015). This made them more active and responsible in their villages. The Village Institutes played a great role in the cultural and educational development of

Turkey. They left many footprints until they were closed. Till their closure, a lot of fields started to be used for agriculture and the level of production increased (Kaynar and Ak, 2017). They were built near cultivating fields, and they earned money from agriculture. Çiftçi and Tunç (2019, p. 347) note that “in fact it reached to such an extent that a small scale of production revolution occurred” in the Village Institutes. A large number of roads, buildings, schools and warehouses were also built by the students, graduates of the Village Institutes and the villagers (Kaynar and Ak, 2017). 1.308 women and 15.943 men, totally 17.251 people were trained as teachers until 1954 when they were closed (Kaynar and Ak, 2017).

The Village Institutes were closed in 1954. As Güler (2013, p.3) argues “bringing education to the villages and bringing education to girls was the ultimate threat to the unquestioned power of the landlords, and the pressure eventually led to the closing”. Landlords were against the Village Institutes as the public would be educated by the teachers who graduated from the Village Institutes and their awareness would increase (Kocabaş, 2017). It would not be easy to dominate peasants who gained their self-esteem and stood on their own feet. Also, they did not like the idea of providing land for the teachers of the Village Institutes to build schools with the cooperation of villagers (Akman and Meydan, 2019).

Although today’s conditions are different from the 1940s, we have a lot to learn from the Village Institutes and the aim of this conceptual paper is an attempt to show that the Village Institutes still appear as a model for teacher education in Turkey with all their remarkable outputs and pay a tribute to them. This article will take a close look at the Institutes starting from general to specific details, particularly their teacher education programmes and how we can make use of them in English language teacher education. There are some studies that examined the Village Institutes in terms of physical education courses and physical activities in the Village Institutes (Çelik and Bayrak, 2011). Cihangir (1990) investigated science education in the Village Institutes. Also, art education has been analyzed in the Village Institutes (Elpe, 2014). However, there still seems to be a gap in the reviewed literature in terms of foreign language teaching in the Village Institutes and its reflections to today’s English language teacher training programmes. In line with this thought, in the following sections, conditions that paved way to the Village Institutes and their curriculum will be explained. Then, foreign language learning strategy in the Village Institutes will be presented, and how the Village Institutes can be a model with all their positive aspects that are somehow missing in today’s English Language Teacher Training Programmes will be discussed.

Conditions that paved way to the Village Institutes

There are crystal rivers

There are icy-cool springs

What lovely soils it has

If you visit Anatolia²

The poem above is generally recited by children in schools in Turkey. It depicts us a postcard imagery of Anatolia. Although the country had all those natural beauties, it was suffering from poverty and illnesses during the time when the Village Institutes were established. The War of Independence gave Turkey its political independence but also left a weary country. It was not an industrialized country

² This is a school poem and song for children. It was translated from Turkish to English by the author. The original one in Turkish is like this: “Billur ırmaqları var/Buzdan kaynakları var/Ne hoş toprakları var/Gezsen Anadolu’yu”.

during those times. The literacy rate was very low in Turkey. 85% of the population was rural and the illiteracy rate in the rurals was over 80% (Başaran, 1990b). As the statistical data in those years indicate, “the number of the children in the age of literacy was 1.897; 1.457 thousand of them were living in villages; 440 thousand of them were living in cities and towns” (Kıral, 2015, p. 46). Villagers without schools used to visit the villages where there were schools to get some help to read their sons’ letters and write letters to their sons in the army. In some villages, there were not any arts and crafts that they could get by, so the villagers were suffering from poverty (Semerci, 1990). Also, schools were suffering from lack of teachers. Teachers were reluctant to go to the villages and work there. There was disperse settlement in the country and accomplishing nationwide primary school education was difficult. In light of these considerations, it was obvious that it was difficult to modernize the education successfully in this condition, and the state was in need of new solutions.

After the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923, many reforms were made in the field of education. The leader and founder of the modern Turkey, Atatürk believed that education was the greatest mean to reach a modern and prosperous society. Atatürk perceived teachers as the leaders of this society. Some steps were taken to reach this goal. By enactment of the ‘Law of Unification of Instruction’ on March 3rd in 1924, all the schools were given under the control of the Ministry of National Education. In 1925, the lodges and zawiya’s were closed as a further step to unify all the educational institutions in Turkey. In 1928, Turkey shifted from Arabic letters to Latin letters. Two quotes of Atatürk highlight the given importance to educational mobility on the rural; “Turkey’s true master is the peasant” and “teachers are the one and only people who save nations”.

Atatürk couldn’t witness the foundation of the Village Institutes, but his speeches shed light on the necessity of educating the peasants in the rurals. Atatürk emphasized that the real war was against the illiteracy after the Independence War. In 1935, the Minister of Culture (during that time, the Minister of National Education was called like that) Saffet Arıkan appointed İsmail Hakkı Tonguç as the General Director of Elementary Education. Then, Hasan Âli Yücel became the Minister of National Education. Hasan Âli Yücel and İsmail Hakkı Tonguç can be called the architects of the Village Institutes. İsmail Hakkı Tonguç took into consideration the report written by John Dewey who came to Turkey in 1924. Uygun (2008, p.292) underlines that “Dewey addressed a wide range of issues regarding teachers, including amelioration of their financial conditions and the need for improvements and innovations in teacher schools and programs”. He suggested a system that was compatible with social life. As Uygun (2008) states, Dewey gave utmost importance to farmers and peasants and asserted that

(...) unless there is special attention given by the schools to the interests of the peasants and farmers, there is considerable danger that the establishment of universal education might actually result in social harm (p.298).

Dewey (1960) asserted that new style schools that would help teachers to adapt to the rural life should be established. When one has a look at numbers in those years, it is seen that “of the 40,000 villages, 31,000 had no school. There was clearly a need for the Village Institutes to train 20,000 teachers to staff the village schools” (Giorgetti, 2009, p. 45). Girgin (2011) emphasizes that

previous experience of training primary school teachers had shown that teachers with urban origins were unable to understand the needs and conditions of the villages, thus decreasing their ability to connect well with the students in village schools as well as the rest of the inhabitants (p. 31).

The underlying notion of Tonguç was more than “a school for every village, a teacher for every school”. Tonguç aimed to educate a different type of teacher:

this ‘new’ type of person would be a person who “constructs buildings or makes goods according to the basic laws of geometry and other sciences”, not a person, who “memorizes the geometry problems, and then forgets after passing the exam” (Sağiroğlu-Aytemur, 2013, p. 84).

During those times, the country was suffering from “the problem of rural revitalization. After considerable debate, the concern led to a government-sponsored program of Village Institutes designed to improve the Anatolian peasant” (Türkmen, 2017, p. 17). They were expected to “revive villages” (Sağiroğlu-Aytemur, 2013). The Village Institutes were established by the Ministry of National Education on April 17th in 1940. First, 14 Village Institutes were established, then, the number increased to 21 in eight years’ time. As Arayıcı (1999) explains,

each institute was granted approximately 350 hectares of land suitable for production. The teaching staff, their families and the students lived in a community formed of a residential block, groups for production and agricultural innovation, and educational premises... They were required to build for themselves (classrooms, dormitories and workshops), cultivate the land, bake bread, tend cattle, repair agricultural machinery, plant trees, dig canals, make roads, etc. (p. 272).

Karaömerlioğlu (1998) states some of the aims of the Institutes as the following:

- a) to end ignorance among peasants
- b) to raise graduates who would be teachers in their villages
- c) to contribute to agricultural economy and increase production
- d) to spread nationalist ideology among peasants and gain “the hearts and minds of peasants”.

Curriculum in the Village Institutes

Dewey’s influence was visible in the Village Institutes. Until 1943, the Institutes did not have a common curriculum, so this helped them to adapt to local needs. As Koçak and Başkan (2012) put it,

the weekly, monthly and seasonal study plans in the institutes had been prepared taking into consideration the regional aspects, the level and number of students, the number of teachers, the production fields of the region and existing tools devices (p.5939).

The first curriculum was prepared in 1943. Study period was 5 years long. Girls and boys were trained side by side. In Table 1, one can see the duration devoted to each group of lessons in the curriculum of 1943 (Özsoy, 1990, p.61).

Table 1. Time devoted to each group of lessons

	Groups of lessons	Number of weeks
1.	Culture lessons	114
2.	Agriculture lessons and activities	58
3.	Technical lessons and activities	58
4.	Holidays	30

In Table 2, the lessons included in each category in 1943 Curriculum can be seen. The greatest importance was given to Mathematics and Foreign Language lessons among the other lessons in this curriculum (Türkmen, 2017).

Table 2. Lessons included in each category in 1943 Curriculum (Kıral, 2015, p. 48; Özsoy 1990, p.61-62)

Culture lessons	Turkish, History, Geography, Civics, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Natural and School Health, Foreign Language, Handwriting, Painting and handcraft, Physical Education and National Games, Music, Military, Housekeeping and Child Care, Teaching Knowledge (Sociology, Occupational Education, Pedagogical and Occupational Psychology, History of Occupational Education, Teaching methodology and application), Economy of Agricultural Activities
Agriculture lessons and Activities	field agriculture, garden agriculture, nursery, fruit growing, vegetable growing, industrial crops agriculture, zoo technics, poultry knowledge, apiculture and sericulture, fisheries and aquaculture, agriculture arts lessons
Technical lessons and activities	blacksmithing (farriery, craft), village carpentry, village maker (brick and bricklaying, quarrying etc.), village and crafts (sewing, cutting, embroidery and etc.)

In the daily plan, both in the morning and afternoon, “there were 45 minutes of 4 hours lessons or work hours, 2 hours study time and 45 minutes free reading time, 8 or 8.5 hours sleeping time, 30 minutes of inspection, music, local and national game or sports time” (Kıral, 2015, p.48). It is evident from the curriculum that the Village Institutes not only focused on vocational training but also cultural development of students. Every student had to read 25 books for each year and learn how to play a musical instrument (Kaynar and Ak, 2017). There were art classes and free reading hours. Reading brought in writing and students put themselves in the shoes of the characters and asked what they would do in the same situation. After the Village Institutes, many graduates became writers and wrote their own books. Fakir Baykurt, Mahmut Makal and Talip Apaydın were a few of those graduates who became writers. After breakfast and morning work hours, they gathered outside and sang the national anthem, folk songs and played folk dance together. Thus, they started the day happily and energetically.

“Education within work” was effective from the establishment and construction of their schools to simple daily activities (Küçüktamer and Uzunboylu, 2015). The Village Institutes adopted these notions “learning by doing”, “work education” and “cooperative learning”. The underlying pedagogy was not based on rote learning but putting into practice what somebody has learnt. Students in the Village Institutes were learning, experiencing, sharing life together and producing at the same time. For example, students learnt the concept of meter while constructing, musical notes while playing the mandolin, angles of a triangle while making a roof, etc. As Aytemur (2007, p. 126) states, “since all the works of the Village Institutes were done by the students themselves, the amount of expenditures declined”. With their savings, they bought some musical instruments such as mandolins, pianos, violins for the Institutes, took students to go skiing (Aytemur, 2007). What is more, “the students studying in the Village Institutes fulfilled all their responsibilities and duties, and they compounded all of their effort with the light of the common goal dependence principle of Cooperative Learning” (Kocabaş, 2017, p. 59). Turkish way of cooperative learning “imece” was used in the Village Institutes. The Institutes sent a group of students to the nearby villages to construct schools and lodges for teachers. At first, the villagers didn’t believe that those young people who seemed like children would be capable of construction but then, their trust towards those students increased after they saw the buildings (Işık, 1990, p. 154). As Kaynar and Ak (2017, p. 328) emphasize “a creative, productive and non-parrot-fashion education model were the key elements of the Village Institutes training system”.

Students actively participated in management. They understood democracy better through this practice. This was very important especially for those years. As Ögüş (1990, p. 149) stresses, democracy is not a way of ruling but a style of life. One should give place to democratic practices at home, at school and in their surroundings and this is directly related to education. Each grade chose a representative and every week, a meeting was held by the participation of the representatives. Those students were free to criticize the principal and the teachers’ actions (Girgin, 2011). At the weekends, all the teachers and students came together and criticized the whole week. These meetings were also open to the villagers (Gelen, 1990). For example, in one of İsmet İnönü’s visit (the second president of the Turkish Republic) to Hasanoğlan Village Institute, a special food for İnönü was served and this situation angered the students. They criticized the management harshly (Dündar, 2000). The management had to come up with an explanation and told the students that İnönü had diabetes, so they served that food. Furthermore, the management reminded the students that they had done the same thing for the students suffering from any illness before, so this attitude could not be taken as a privilege.

In 1947, the curriculum was changed. The girls and boys were separated, and they started to be trained in two separate Institutes. Instead of practice-based courses, more theoretical courses were offered. Furthermore, Kırıl (2015, p. 48) explains that the given freedom and flexibility to teachers “about selection of topics and methods in the old curriculum were removed. Teachers' freedom of choice about regional and institutional facilities in agriculture lessons was restricted”.

The third Curriculum was prepared in 1953. Its name was “Curriculum of Teacher Schools and the Village Institutes”. Başaran (1990a) believes that if the Institutes hadn’t been closed, they would possibly turn into regional universities different from the newly established universities nowadays. Without getting any financial support from the state, they would be able to produce their own inputs with their financial, academic and administrative autonomy.

In the following parts, a special focus will be given to foreign language education in the Village Institutes, and there will also be a part that puts research studies investigating foreign language teacher education programmes under scrutiny in Turkey. With their unique features in mind, the Village Institutes can still stand as a model to today’s teacher training programmes. As Koçak and Başkan (2012, p.5939) emphasize, the Village Institutes “had been nested with life”, and they were the places “where theory and practice had been regarded integral parts”. With all their positive aspects, they formed “a basis for the Anatolian Renaissance” (Kaynar and Ak, 2017, p. 328).

Foreign language education in the Village Institutes

As Sarıçoban and Sarıçoban (2012) state, in the early years of the Turkish Republic, language teaching was in a secondary position as illiteracy was a more important issue during the first decades of the Turkish Republic. During and after the World War II, the interest in foreign language learning increased in parallel to the social, cultural, economic, technological, and political developments in the world (Sarıçoban and Sarıçoban, 2012).

In 1943 Curriculum, 411 hours were allocated to foreign language education. Greatest significance was given to Mathematics and foreign language education in terms of time allocation. Between 1st and 4th grades, 2 hours were allocated to English lessons while for 5th grades, 1 hour was allocated.

Today, the literature on foreign language education in the Village Institutes is quite limited. From the reviewed literature, we know that students published “Village Institution Journal” (Kirby, 1962). Kirby (1962, p.242) states that in this journal, one can find the response of the Village Institutes against the inefficient foreign language education in other schools. It was based on learning by themselves strategy. Foreign language learning was seen:

- a) as a functional research tool
- b) as a tool to learn teaching methods
- c) as applied directly on the necessary material
- d) as a tool to facilitate village teachers’ and students’ attempts to improve their techniques and classroom behaviors (Kirby, 1962, p. 242).

According to 1943 Curriculum, the aim of foreign language education was to help students read a text related to their profession by looking up in a dictionary and make them equipped with knowledge that they could improve in the future (Öztürk, 1990). Foreign language learning was not an ornament but a way to bring culture to villages. Students conducted research on various topics from Botany to Zoology. Foreign language was a tool to reach the necessary information from foreign books (Kirby, 1962). Unfortunately, during those times, there were not enough language teachers. Compared to the Village Institutes, the conditions in the High Village Institute were much better in terms of foreign language education. The High Village Institute was the only higher education option for the graduates of the Village Institutes. They admitted only successful students with an exam. Its aim was to raise teachers for the Village Institutes (Çiftçi and Tunç, 2019). In the High Village Institute, English, German and French were taught by professional language teachers. As Gürçağlar (2008) underlines, the intellectuals who worked in the High Village Institute were also associated with the Translation Bureau. For example, popular writers, translators such as Sabahattin Eyüpoğlu, İrfan Sahinbaş, Vedat Günyol taught language and literature courses in the High Village Institute. 3 hours were allocated to language classes per week. There was even a language room where they could use various discs and books. Thanks to teachers that came from high schools and Gazi Education Institute, students were able to read a text related to their profession with or without a dictionary (Öztürk, 1990). Classics were read, analyzed and discussed by the students. Students read the classics as soon as they were published by the Ministry of National Education. Language was one of the means to gain an intellectual background. In 1947 Curriculum, there were some changes in the annual and weekly plan. Foreign language lessons became voluntary, but in fact they were totally abolished from the curriculum. Those changes can be considered as steps taken towards *de facto* closure of the Village Institutes.

In the following part, English language teacher training programmes in Turkey will be compared with the Village Institutes’ education programmes in terms of practicum hours and the kind of teacher they want(ed) to raise.

The problems of English language teacher training programmes in Turkey

In the reviewed literature, an increasing number of studies evaluating English language teacher training programmes have been carried out in Turkey. Several researchers have reported various problems reported by pre-service teachers and plausible suggestions to enhance the future teacher training programmes. In accordance with the findings of Uzun (2016), it seems that

there is need for more courses which will allow creativity, practice and socialisation. It would also be beneficial if the content and procedure of the courses were revised and restructured in such a

way that they would produce less memorisation and more permanent, internalised and digested knowledge and experiences, possibly through extensive practice (p.12).

Similarly, another scholar, Uztosun (2017, p. 11) suggests that “the methods used to teach new information should be effective. Instead of relying on lecturing, trainee-centred methods should be used to foster teachers’ engagement in the training process”. Furthermore, Uztosun (2017, p. 10) emphasized that pre-service teachers “cannot engage in the training process because trainers rely on lecturing without creating an interactive learning environment”.

Another scholar Karakaş (2012, p. 6-7) explains that in the programme, “the new status of English as a global language is not conveyed”. Another related problem is the lack of culture-based lessons that offer information about target cultures, not only about cultures of native speakers of English but also English speakers of other languages all around the world. There should be more focus on varieties of English.

Çelik (2008, p. 97) emphasizes the importance of practice teaching as it “constitutes a major component of the professional education and the development of pre-service teachers before they go on to the actual teaching profession”. He further notes that pre-service teachers can “put into practice the theoretical knowledge and practical skills they have acquired throughout their coursework” (Çelik, 2009, p. 98). However, there are some problems evident in teaching practice in teacher education in Turkey. Seferoğlu (2006, p. 376) suggests that pre-service teachers would benefit more from school experience and teaching practice if they could observe “many different teachers, students with various proficiency levels, and many different school settings”. Practicum hours are still not enough and effective as practicum hours are only limited to one school and one teacher. Visiting a school only once a week does not help students understand different aspects of learning and teaching. Moreover, for Uztosun and Troudi (2015, p. 24), students observe a class only in their last year and this is too late to experience real teaching and learning environment. Likewise, Karakaş (2012) puts it:

it maintains that theory and practice combined with each other must be experienced right from the outset of the program instead of taking academic and theoretical courses first, and only then proceeding towards the school rooms (p.7).

Although practicum hours have the mentioned problems, in Uzun (2016, p.11), students still found School Experience and Teaching Practice the most effective and useful and the least boring as they “felt like real teachers during their education which improved their confidence and desire to move further”. Hismanoğlu (2012, cited in Yavuz and Topkaya, 2013) revealed that this programme failed to foster higher order thinking skills in pre-service teachers such as problem solving, creative thinking and critical thinking. In the mentioned studies, it is also evident that students’ opinions should be consulted regularly.

A closer look at the reviewed literature shows that the most important component that lacks in language teacher training programmes is the amount of practice when compared to the Village Institutes. As Eret-Orhan et al. (2018, p. 194) highlight, “a well-designed practicum would nevertheless offer invaluable opportunities for pre-service teachers to develop professional skills and suitable dispositions towards teaching”. In this sense, we should benefit from the Village Institutes experience. The students in the Village Institutes practiced what they had learnt theoretically. As Kırıl (2015, p.51) emphasizes, “the most significant contribution of Village Institutes for educational system was enabling principles and methods which existed in literature so far in the system to combine them with the life in nature”. In this line of thought, students can start classroom observations in their freshman

year so that they can understand the nature of the profession because separation of theory and practice hinders their in-depth understanding of the profession. Students should also find the chance to discuss and analyze classroom management techniques. In the Village Institutes, the underlying pedagogical understanding was to raise teachers who gained their self-confidence and could take initiatives where and when necessary. As Özsoy (1990, p.67) states, during the lessons, students were encouraged to self-study and think freely. Although there is a standardized curriculum for English Language Teacher Education programmes, universities can offer more selective courses in which students can apply what they have learnt and learn to take initiatives.

Taking all those exemplary points regarding teacher education and the value given to prospective teachers, the Village Institutes still enlighten our path in teacher education.

Conclusion

Although the Village Institutes were closed due to the political conflicts, their significance was beyond education. In fact, it was a liberation project of the villages. The Village Institutes raised teachers who were aware of themselves, the surrounding environment and their own transformative power and were able to think critically. The Village Institutes increased the literacy rate, transformed the villages, made them more productive and aware of their power, saved them from exploitation and spread the love of reading, art, nature and filled them with the feelings of respect and tolerance in a very short period of time. It was this uniqueness that took the most attention.

Taking the Village Institutes as a model does not mean to found the same institutions again in Turkey but consider them as a significant part of our heritage. Needless to say, demographic conditions of Turkey have changed a lot. However, their main principles based on cooperation, collaboration, equity, production and creativity can be applied everywhere. They presented an innovative, original training system to the Turkish education system. The taken for granted sentence “teacher is more than a teacher” was realized thanks to the Village Institutes. Their participatory nature with the society is still a quest for Turkey, and we need more participatory education models, maybe a modified version of the Village Institutes which will provide students with equal learning opportunities.

The discussions about the Village Institutes can offer insights to our education system and teacher education programmes. During those years, teachers were very aware of the fact that the future would be their devotion as addressed by M. Kemal Atatürk. We can learn from the positive outcomes of that experience and find other solutions that will raise our country “to the level of modern civilization” as the founder of the Turkish Republic and our head teacher, M. Kemal Atatürk strived to show us.

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