■ Murat Kaymak

THE VILLAGE INSTITUTES AS "SCHOOLS OF LIFE AND WORK"

LIFE AND EDUCATION

In Ancient Greece education meant acquiring knowledge and skills that have, or were supposed to have in the future, an equivalent in life. In order to prove how indispensible education was it was in the first place necessary to demonstrate the use of the thing learnt to the learner, and more importantly, to the society. Beginning with the Greek philosophers, this fact has survived with minor changes up until our day. For example, Plato in his *Republic* and other dialogues dwells on the uses of education and learning. He states that education inculcates many essential things in life as well health, happiness, beauty and, above all, virtue for the attainment of success. In the *Lysis* dialogue, Plato exemplifies how such an education liberates the individual:

> For example, if they want anything read or written, you, I presume, would be the first person in the house who is summoned by them.
> – Very true.
> – And you would be allowed to write or read the letters in any order which you please, or to take up the lyre and tune the notes, and play with the fingers, or strike with the plectrum, exactly as you please, and neither father nor mother

would interfere with you.
–That is true, he said.
– Then what can be the reason, Lysis, I said, why they allow you to do the one and not the other?[1]

Aristotle's views on education likewise dwell on specifying and explicating the function of education in life. Especially his views in *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics* present a detailed explanation of the relationship he builds between education and life. Stating that life of humans differs from that of animals in terms of their capacity to make use of reason, Aristotle endeavors to put together education and "life in activity".[2]
The criticism that schools lost connection with life was first voiced, to a large extent, by the Stoics in Rome. The Emperor Marcus Aurelius complained that "schools of rhetoric stupefy the youth" while Seneca bitterly observed, "We learn for school rather than for life". This line of critical attitude continued with Comenius and Locke.[3]
Rousseau placed life in the center of education he designed for Emile, saying that "Living is the art that I am going to teach him"[4]. Of the two different education methods developed by the Spartans and Athenians[5], he opted for the Spartans' education, which meant the teaching of life. "Above all, if you fail to raise mischievous children, you can never succeed in raising wise children. This was the Spartan way of educating children: Rather than making children slaves of books, they first taught them how to steal their own food."[6]
Viewing education as a means for preparing people for life and schools

1 Platon, *Toplu Diyaloglar-1* , EOS Yayınevi, Ankara 2007, p. 188.
2 Aristoteles, *Eğitim Üzerine* (Ed. John Burnet, trans. Ahmet Aydoğan) Say Yayınları, İstanbul 2006, p. 44.
3 İgnacy Szaniwaski, *Okulun Toplumsal İşlevi* (Trans.Tahsin Yılmaz), Onur Yayınları, Ankara, p. 22.
4 J. J. Rosusseau, *Emile-Yahut Terbiyeye Dair*, (Trans: Hilmi Ziya Ülken, Ali Rıza Ülgener, Salahattin Güzey), Türkiye Yayınevi, İstanbul 1953, p.12.
5 Athenian education focused more on the individual while Spartan education was geared towards the state. Therefore, the Athenians did not have public education per se, the Spartans, on the other hand, had developed their education system on a public basis. For this comparison see Ellwood P. Cubberley, *Eğitim Tarihi-1* (Trans. Engin Noyan), Yeryüzü Yayınları, Ankara 2004, pp.38-52.
6 Ivi, p. 107

as the venue for this preparation, we need to answer the question "what kind of life" so as to explain the ideal relationship between school and life. While answering this question, Szanawski makes use of the concept of "objectification of life". After discussing the views of German educationalists such as Hebart, Ziller and Rein, who saw school as preparation for life, Szaniawski dwells on the views of Dewey, who believed that school is life itself by saying "education is life"[7].

The debate of "approximation of school to life" based on the question of how the relationship between modern school and social life ought to be, a question that Szaniawksi regarded very highly, was not then fully resolved. Nevertheless, the views that emanated from the discussion of vocational education in the 19th and early 20th century led to many new possibilities and opportunities in terms of turning school into life itself. The movement of vocational education criticized the conventional old schools arguing that the education in schools had no correspondence to real life and that it remained outside the realities of life.

The figures who voiced these objections included Michael Anton Kerschensteiner (1854-1932), John Dewey (1859 - 1952), Jean-Ovide Decroly (1871-1932), Pavel Petrovich Blonsk (1884–1941). Inspired by the understanding of "vocational education" propounded by these educationists, countless educationists proposed teaching methods and programs that aimed at removing the barriers between school and life. Thanks to these proposals, as opposed to the paradigm of "preparing school for life", ideas of "approximation of school to life" or of treating education as life itself and equating school and life came to the fore and won many supporters amongst educationists. Therefore, the first half of the 19th century is duly called the era of reform in education.

As the founder of the Village Institutes, İsmail Hakkı Tonguç too was

7 John Dewey, *Günümüzde* Eğitim (Haz: Joseph Ratner, Çev. Edit: Bahri Ata-Talip Öztürk), Pegem Akademi Yay, Ankara2010, p. 3. The words of Dewey appear in the first article in the book called *Pedagojik İnançlarım* (My Pedagogic Convictions) which was originally published in 1897. "…education as a social process is nothing other than social life in which a nation's legacy is distributed to students in a classroom and which uses the child's powers for social purposes; it is a form of social life which condenses in all institutions deemed to be most effective. Therefore education is not some sort of preparation for future life but life itself. The school ought to represent existing life—the life as lively and real as the one the child can lead in the playground, in nearby surroundings and home…"

one of the followers of educationists that advocated vocational schools. The kind of vocational education Tonguç adopted was a synthesis of views of the educationists mentioned above but it also went beyond them for his understanding of education was not an education-centered one involving school, program and student only but one that involved all the other factors that impinged on education. It problematized the effect of the surroundings on education as a principal issue, and thus it went beyond the paradigm that centers on teacher and student. He envisaged that a successful education could be achieved only by means of modern surroundings.

This article will dwell on how Tonguç devised and developed the Village Institutes as a model of "schools of life and work" within the framework of a synthesis of three aspects, namely, vocational education, Turkey's rural problem and effecting change in villages via "invigoration by means of education"; this question also involves how and when he came to this idea and how he put it into practice in the Village Institutes.

EVOLUTION OF TONGUÇ'S UNDERSTANDING OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

In the early 1930s Tonguç apparently broke away with the classic paradigm of approximation of school and life and equating school and life adopted in terms of the relationship between school and life. This rupture would make him one of the brightest thinkers and practitioners in the history of education philosophy. By propounding that school ought to be considered in connection with the surroundings which effects the process of education, he transformed vocational education in which he was raised into a paradigm that would (in theory and practice) successfully unify school-surroundings relationship in a country 80% of the population of which lived in rural areas and which had very low literacy rates.

As Engin Tonguç[8] demonstrates, Tonguç collected a considerable amount of information about vocational education and vocational schools in his visits abroad in 1929. It can be said that afterwards he focused more on the same issue. In the period 1929-1940 Tonguç started intensively to

8 Engin Tonguç, *Bir Eğitim devrimcisi: İsmail Hakkı Toguç* (Yaşamı, Öğretisi, Eylemi) C.1, 2. Baskı, Güldikeni Yayınları, Amkara 2001, p.156-157.

translate, write articles and books along with his bureaucratic duties. In a sense these are the years in which his education paradigm improved and became unique.

His book İş ve Meslek Eğitimi (*Vocational and Professional Education)* published in 1933 harbors his views on vocational education and informs his future education paradigm. Kirby[9] also draws attention to Tonguç's Preface to his *The Teaching of Painting, Handiwork and Art in Primary and Secondary Teachers Schools*, which he had first prepared as lecture notes and then published:

"The purpose in teaching students print techniques with paper template, hubbing and linocut, decoration techniques with brushes, making of solid models, modeling and cladding pictures is *not solely to make them skillful; the students will try to appreciate modern works of art by making them on their own*. Thus, through this practice, we can help children and youth grasp the language of art."

The italicized sentence above should be read in tandem with the following one he quotes in his *Vocational and Professional Education*, where he quotes *Sociology of Pedagogy* by Karl Weiss (1895-1959):

> Learning through life depends on social evaluation as well as *the teaching institution facilitating the education and the level of technical work*. Generally, as a rule, in primitive societies where a narrow work technique is put to practice in economic form (picking fruit, primitive farming, hunting, husbandry, primitive artisanship and similar activities) education and everyday activities constitute a whole. Children grow up along with their parents' work techniques depending on their skills.
>
> Children's passive participation in life continues in this fashion; their involvement in life in a game-like manner gradually turns into serious matter; children who embrace everyday life finally find themselves in business without any mediation. This engagement in productive and practical vocational education has survived to our day albeit in minimal way.[10]

One can easily observe that the keywords in both quotations are "life" and "practice". This understanding is in line with that which Kerschen-

9 Fay Kirby, T*ürkiye'de Köy Enstitüleri* (Çev.Niyazi berkes), Tarihçi Kitabevi, İstanbul. 2010, pp.121-122,

10 İsmail Hakkı Tonguç, *İş ve Meslek Eğitimi*, TÖBDER Yay. Ankara 1974, pp.28-29.

steiner, Dewey, Decroly and Blonski attempted to build between education and life. Education for these educationists should not be preparation for life but should be life itself. Tonguç himself adopted this fundamental principle. Therefore the idea of "education through life" mentioned in the quotation above reflects the essence of the relationship between vocational education and education through life, which Tonguç embraced.

His quotation from Weiss leads Tonguç first to make a definition of "education through life": "Education through life is nothing other than educating the new generations through life in compliance with the needs of society." He goes on to explain this definition by means of the quotation given above.

Vocational and Professional Education is definitely significant in terms of the fact that it foreshadows the kind of education he would later use in the Village Institutes. Especially his following remarks imply that economic and social life would be transformed within the framework of vocational and professional education:

> …there can no abstract or general education. Its quality, kind and degree always and only finds its reflections in individuals' expertise and professional capabilities. When acquired after a training, profession and work imply that individuals make use of the skills in a specific field. One of the most crucial functions of education today ought to reunite human beings that are surrounded by the circumference of economic and social life with their vocational and professional prospects[11].

Tonguç's early acquaintance with vocational training school plays a great role in the development of these ideas. The maturation of these ideas also owes something to his knowledge of German and his training visits to Germany in different periods (1918/1919-1922/1923). After he moved from Konya to Ankara, he made study visits to many European countries, particularly Germany, as a ministry employee. In the articles he wrote after these visits it appears that he dwells on the improvements in vocational education in Europe while at the same time comparing these with Turkey. For instance his article "Avrupa Deneme Okulları"

11 Ivi, p.121.

(1929) (European Pilot Schools) is exactly such a text.
Therefore, though Kirby draws attention in this context to the two books mentioned above, the precursor texts of Tonguç's ideas can be traced back especially to the articles about teaching tools and painting classes in primary schools that he wrote before these two books. However, despite these texts, his article on vocational education published in the journal *Terbiye* in 1930 called "El İşleri Mi? İşle Öğretim Mi?"[12] (Handiwork or Teaching by Means of Work?) provides more clues about his unique education philosophy. To be precise, this article can be further seen as the starting point in his understanding of vocational education.
In this article Tonguç remarks that handiwork and vocational education are two different things; he maintains that there are three types of schools. The first of these is tutoring schools, the second education schools and third one is vocational schools. After briefly explaining the fist two types of school, Tonguç passes on to vocational schools. He states that there are four different types of vocational schools, explaining each in one by one.
In the first type of vocational schools, the main thesis is to produce "things that have economic value and meet needs". Though the first of example of such schools appeared in the 17th century in England, he maintains, the best examples for these schools are those in the Soviet Union. Explaining these schools by drawing from Blonsky, who is the one of the leading theoreticians of these schools, Tonguç makes significant deductions about the school he would later put into practice:

> If one wants to draw from handiwork classes the kind of outcomes that the relevant professions would bring forth as in the Soviet Union, there is no other option other than turning these schools into productive units. It is impossible to implement handiwork classes in a school whose organization and purpose are not designed and arranged in line with production.[13]

The second type of vocational school has been designed against the drawbacks of productive schools especially by Kerschensteiner. Accord-

12 İsmail Hakkı Tonguç, *Kitaplaşmamış Yazılar C.II* (Haz. Mustafa Aydoğan), Köy Enstitüleri ve Çağdaş Eğitim Vakfı, Ankara 2000, pp.179-189.
13 Ivi, p.182.

ing to this viewpoint the school is "a viable stage for activities done with hand."[14]

The third type of school is the one where neither school is considered sufficient; here the work is not carried onto the school as it exists in life; students own their products, using school as the venue where the work has been completed; therefore, the school is one where "works are disseminated"[15]. The theoretician of type of school was Dr. Oskar Frey, who prepared a report on primary school programs in Turkey.

The fourth type is the school advocated by Hugo Gaudig. In this school the pedagogic value of the work was based on the process of the work itself[16], rather than the work produced.

After summarizing vocational schools in this way, Tonguç talks about our education system and the evolution of handiwork classes. In this section he refers especially to İsmail Hakkı Baltacıoğlu, quoting him copiously to elucidate the importance of handiwork classes.

In the final paragraph of this article Tonguç gives fundamental clues about how he is going to improve vocational education for this was exactly what he would do in the Village Institutes:

> We need to write about and discuss vocational education in detail, after that we need to reshape our schools in line with structure of the Turkish society. The vocational schools and handiwork classes of the future will be born only by means of the cooperation of colleagues[17].

Indeed, with his pioneering work, the Village Institutes proved to be a successful practice in a short time thanks to the Minister of Education, who defended the Institutes, and the Institute directors, each of whom was specifically experienced in relevant fields.

It appears that during the establishment period of the Village Institutes, defenders of conventional schools and educationists advocating one type of vocational school type mentioned above failed to understand Tonguç and opposed him. Tonguç met this opposition not during or after the

14 Ivi, p.183.
15 Ivi, p.184.
16 Ivi, p.185.
17 Ivi, p.188.

drafting of the law on the Village Institutes but as early as the first Milli Eğitim Şurası (National Education Council) on July 17-29, 1939.
His reactions to the assaults apparently include very severe statements as well as crystallizing his own education model to a great extent. For instance he fiercely attacks the approach that interprets problems at schools in terms of teachers' competence or incompetence or that evaluates students' success merely in terms of exam performance. He goes as far as saying directly to these educations that, if tested, they would fail in the primary school exams, thus fail to graduate.
He objects to those who oppose teaching students how to ride bicycles or motorbikes, saying:

> We consider students' ability write and speak effectively on a given topic a part of culture; isn't their ability to ride a motorbike a part of culture, too? … A person whose fate depends on the donkey cannot succeed in life. That is why we want these children to be able ride a motorbike, motorcar or bike.[18]

THE FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION OF RURAL EDUCATION

Though Tonguç appeared as an unusual figure with his ideas on vocational education, the way he dealt with the basic education problems in Turkey made him a leading figure. This feature of his can be detected in countless articles he wrote on primary school education. However, what makes him a spearhead figure is the way he approaches the education problems through villages where 80% of the populations then lived.
To exemplify the uniqueness of his approach one can consult his observations about life in villages in the final section of his book *Vocational and Professional Education.* According to Tonguç village is the most urgent education issue. All the educationists will have to tackle this problem. In the days when he penned his thoughts, the village problem was an issue was "shrouded with a cloud of fog in distant horizons".
The names he mentioned which he believed was necessary to understand the villagers included Carl Weiss and Wilhelm Oskar Fritz Giese, who wrote works on work psychology. In his analyses of our villages he also

18 Ibidem, pp.137-149.

refers to Şevket Süreyya Aydemir and Hüsrev Tökin, both leading writers in the journal *Kadro*. Tonguç's book *Vocational and Professional Education* suggests that especially Tökin's "Türkiye Köy İktisadiyati" (The Village Economics in Turkey) can be regarded as the major resource in his analyses.

From 1936 onwards Tonguç focused more on the village problem, writing articles on villages and education in villages in the journal of Kültür Bakanlığı (Ministry of Culture) and Ülkü of Halkevleri. Among these are such articles as *Anadolu Köylerinde Kalkınma Hareketleri: Okullar* (*Development Movements in Anatolian Villages: Schools*) (1936), *Köy Öğretmen ve Eğitmeni Yetiştirme İşi* (*The Issue of Educating Village Teachers and Instructors*) (1936), *İlköğretim ve Eğitim Meselesi* (*The Problem of Primary Education*) (1937), *Köy Eğitimi* (*Village Education*) (1937). In 1938 he published *Village Education*, whose preface begins with the sentence "without having no idea what education in villages is like, it is impossible to foresee how it will turn out". This book presents a panorama of the conditions of villages and education. Tonguç makes some suggestions as to how education in villages should be executed; nevertheless he published his book *Eğitim Yolu ile Canlandırılacak Köy* (*The Village to Be Invigorated by Means of Education*) as an answer to what education should be like one year later.

"LIFE AND WORK SCHOOL" IN THE VILLAGE

As can be seen Tonguç's vocational education focuses thoroughly on village life. For him the village is not a settlement to be interfered from outside in order to transform it. Rather it is a placed to be revived from the inside.

In Tonguç's education philosophy and naturally in his Village Institutes project the concept of "invigoration" needs a special treatment. For this purpose, we need to consult the first chapter of one of his pioneering works, *Vocational and Professional Education*.

Tonguç places school at the center of social change since it is the most powerful carrier of civilization. The new civilization involves changes in every aspect of life. However, this civilization develops and prospers in

cities. While Western civilization has overcome the gap between urban and rural settlements, in countries like ours this problem persists. Villages in our country are still far from being developed. Education policies tend to imitate "European schools" and thus fail to function properly. Tonguç very rightly asks the following questions:

> How are we to educate the farmers, who constitute 70% of our population and whose lives are directly linked to nature? To what extent an education system geared to urban life and the needs of the educated elite can cater for productive rural classes? How should farmers, who must change their living conditions to adapt themselves to the economic conditions in the world, be furnished with techniques so that they can control nature in the future?[19]

The answers to these questions could be given only by a new education paradigm and schools in harmony with this paradigm. These schools would be the Village Institutes, which would invigorate villages. The new education ought to begin by encouraging villagers get to know the essence of their country in its entirety. This is not a development activity as we know it. In Tonguç's own words,

> One needs not improve the village but invigorate it. This is possible only by means of establishing an education system that is run according to the methods that will enable villagers change nature and their fates.[20]

The difference that Tonguç establishes between "improvement" and "invigoration" arises from another difference between effecting change from the outside and from the inside. The improvement model consists of bringing what is new to the village. In the invigoration model, on the other hand, what is new is what the villagers themselves discover, observe and experience. In order for the villagers to reach that point, education in villages ought to go beyond mere literacy education. It was seen that conventional school system would not lead to that ideal. The village would not attain anything with schools run by clergymen. Success could

19 Ivi, p.19.
20 İsmail Hakkı Tonguç, *Eğitim Yoluyla Canlandırılacak Köy*, Köy Enstitüleri ve Çağdaş Eğitim Vakfı Yay, Ankara 1998, p.53.

be attained only by means of "teachers educated by village instructors and teachers raised in the Village Institutes, medical officers, experts trained in Village Institutes and other well-educated individuals"[21].

The main purpose of Village Institutes was to educate teachers that would bring primary education to all the people in villages and other professionals that would be useful to the village. Teachers and other professionals who graduated from Village Institutes were not civil servants in the traditional sense. They were people who were to live and settle down in the villages they were assigned.

Tonguç believed that "knowing means doing."[22] Children who were educated at the Village Institutes were raised with the philosophy of "inside work, through work". Therefore, they became passionate lovers of their jobs. The basis of their school was "life" and "work". This school included the natural surroundings of the village. So that they could be called Village Institutes, schools ought to have "agricultural garden plot, workshop, animals, game and sports facilities"[23]. These are the production facilities required for the maintenance of life, yet they are also educational tools.

Education through life is achieved through the employment of means of production which are used for the continuation of life for the sake of education. In addition, for a school to be a vocational school it is necessary that type of work for each child should be distinguished and well defined[24].

CONCLUSION

Village Institutes are the models for "life and work school" designed in line with Turkey's conditions by Tonguç, who attempted to bring life and education together as a response to the debate concerning the relationship between education and life.

Schools' consideration along with their surroundings, as we attempted

21 Ivi, p.547.
22 Ivi, p.664.
23 Ivi, p.688.
24 Ivi, p.689.

to explain above, played a great role in the conception of Village Institutes as models.

Village Institutes are facilities that fundamentally aim at invigorating villages by means of education. Invigoration of villages means transformation of villages into modern settings by means of changing them from the inside. Invigoration of villages is "a case between the old school and the new one."[25]

Tonguç's relationship with vocational education movement plays a determining role on the road leading to Village Institutes. The analyses of vocational education movement regarding the differences between old and new schools have been illuminating for him.

In the early years of the Republic the prevailing idea was that education problem in Turkey was nothing other than education problem in villages. However, education practices in villages did not produce the desired outcomes. Though Tonguç came to the awareness that education problem could be solved by means of vocational education in the early 1930s, he could find the suitable atmosphere to put his plans into practice only after 1938. After this point he merged his project of life and work school with the ideal of invigorating the village by means of education and created Village Institutes, which later became role models for countries experiencing similar problems.

Village Institutes have become a model practice that can show the ideal relationship between life and work and the methods to tackle the problems that appear along the way.

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25 Ivi, p.679.

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