

Free reading activities at village institutes: Why and how?

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Abstract

In this study, it was aimed to discuss the free reading activities (FRA) practised for 1 hour at 21 different Village Institutes in Turkey in pedagogical respects. In this regard, FRA, applied within the scope of an extra programme, was analysed in terms of content and method on the basis of cognitive and affective learning. When the findings of this research were evaluated, it was seen that raising literary readers is a part of the educational activities at the institute. The FRA is a programme design supporting the enrichment of intellectual, emotional, social and aesthetic developments. The main purpose of education in the village is the problem of selecting and preparing the books to be read during free reading hours in a well manner. The educators of the period implementing the FRAs created an original model of education appropriate to the social reality of the people and in accordance with their educational needs.

Keywords: Free reading activities (FRAs), village institutes (VI), Turkish curricula, document review.

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1. Introduction

In the 1940s, one of the most basic problems of Anatolia was teacher training for villages, as much as water and land. The need for village teachers, who developed their critical consciousness through reading and created enlightenment in their own thinking worlds, was essential for cultural capital. For this reason, educator projects, based on the assumption that those knowing the village best could only be the manpower raised there, were developed. However, it was thought comprehensively on how an educational initiative covering the whole country would be. Tonguç (2019) argues that the Village Institutes 'originated from the need of raising teachers, who will enable villages become active through education and will provide a complete primary school education in villages till the end of their lives, and other craftsmen useful for villages'. The Village Institutes were established by the Grand National Assembly on 17 April 1940 in pursuant of Law no. 3803.

One of the most important tasks of these institutes, which were based on comprehensive development of the individual, was to enrich the vocabulary of the students in the educational institutions opened and to be opened in villages and to provide them with the understanding of the written language. To this end, selecting and preparing the books to be read during the free reading hours became one of the basic conditions of providing education in villages. It was essential to raise a generation, by reading much and who could think by comprehending what s/he read, in a short time. According to Tonguç (2019), 'the basic reason for various conflicts, of which many examples are witnessed today, is the fact that many of our people, constituting the group of people called intellectual, do not read any works other than school books and not permanently follow any beneficial newspaper and magazine to increase their cultural level'. Reading and thinking were the starting points for overcoming all kinds of problems. The activity, called free reading, was implemented continuously for the formation of praxis based on the critical conscious.

One of the most important indicators of the cultural level of countries is the presence of active citizens with critical reading awareness and level. By means of critical or universal reading, individuals may have the abilities necessary for questioning, evaluating etc. daily life practices (Aslan & Güneylü, 2008). When examining the reading skill in a historical context and within the scope of Turkish literature, VIs and efforts and studies of İsmail Hakkı Tonguç, a Turkish pedagogue and one of its architects, general director of primary education, are mentioned. Tonguç argues by referencing Kant that Western humanity reached its 'adulthood' on the basis of secularity. Tonguç emphasises the necessity of reading awareness and sensitivity as a condition for educating enlightened teachers having internalised the values of the Republic, appreciating art and science. Under the leadership of the Minister of Education and Culture Hasan Ali Yücel and Translation Office President Sabahattin Eyüboğlu, World Classics were translated to allow students to have reading habits. The philosophy of that period's great awakening was teachers with free thought and conscience and their protecting scientific values, and development in reading skill was of great importance in this respect. Teachers had to read books regularly that would contribute their development so that they could be equipped with updated information. For this reason, the FRA was of great importance in the Village Institutes.

Binyazar (1990) urges that this free reading activity in the institutes opened the doors of a new understanding for the society in thought and literature life. This is a revolution in the ideational context. Every society supports the revolution of understanding and comprehension it creates with the classics. These reading activities aimed to make the reality dominant on community life. The purpose of intensive reading activities at the institutes was to raise the modern people useful to the

country, having learned to respect labour and who did not believe in any unproven information, because history always shows that the reason for the underdevelopment of societies was mostly unconsciousness arising from illiteracy and class interests of governments.

The FRA, believed to have great importance in the development of critical consciousness, allows students to read well-qualified books in accordance with their levels, developing them morally, out of their course subjects. Free reading enables students to become human beings loving books and cannot stand their absence and to spend their free time in a beneficial way by broadening their views and enriching them in terms of general culture. The free reading times, having been useful regarding education and training discipline, should be efficient. Students should be ensured to read at least one book per month. Free reading and using library would be regulated by an internal regulation and a copy would be sent to the ministry. Tonguç (2019) expresses his ideas about free reading as follows: 'In institutions where free reading is not attached importance, spying are considered as applicable services, tyrants become hero. Such a school leads to underdevelopment and could not serve to the Republic, but it corrupts all values brought by the Republic and becomes a means destroying it. The solution to prevent this disaster cooperatively is to allow millions of young people to be educated in schools, wherever they are located in the village or in the city, to have the habit of reading by leading system to the free reading'.

It was a necessity of becoming the literate class that the general culture levels of teachers had to be at the highest level. It was wholeheartedly believed that social problems had to be solved through research and analysis based on scientific knowledge in an ethical context. A republic based on conscious citizen power and FRA as liberation praxis for ideational production were considered essential. Doğanay (1999) argues that it is not sufficient that the sovereignty is owned by the public and determined by laws, but the important thing is to enable the public having the capacity of using its rights. Knowing how to use the right of sovereignty, as Freire stated, is to solve the contradiction of the oppressor and oppressed. Freire urges that a human being's ontological capacity can go into action on his/her own world and transform this world. This leads human beings to new possibilities. Sectarianism is a type of action ignoring freedom. It is an obstacle before the liberation of humanity. Liberated individuals cannot become passive against the violence of the oppressor. A human being must trace the freedom continuously and responsibly. 'Liberation is a birth and a painful birth. The human being is a raising creature, it has an unfinished character. The goal of social life is the humanisation of the world. Humanisation is prevented by injustice and violence of oppressors. Dehumanisation refers to destroying the ability of humanity. The biggest human and historical duty of the oppressed is to free themselves and their oppressors. This could be done by problem descriptive education and dialogue' (Freire, 2016). Freire considers education as a praxis of liberation. In this regard, it can be said that FRA is an act of liberation developing based on a dialogue.

In this study, it was aimed to discuss the FRA implemented for 1 hour every day at 21 different VIs in Turkey thoroughly in pedagogical respects. In this regard, the FRA, applied within the scope of an extra programme, was analysed in terms of content and method on the basis of cognitive and affective learning. To sum up, the purpose of this was to gain an insight about the FRA applied in the Village Institutes, to contribute to a qualified Turkish education by emphasising positive studies and to direct future Turkish curricula on how to implement FRA.

2. Method

This research was designed in accordance with the qualitative approach and data were gathered through document analysis. Bowen (2009) stated that document analysis is used in order to review and evaluate written, published and electronic documents. The documents examined in this study are curriculums, books and articles written about the Village Institutes. In these documents, FRA-related parts were studied and thus content was limited, while documents were included in the study, especially FRA studies of İsmail Hakkı Tonguç were focused on. A descriptive analysis was carried out in the evaluation related to FRA within the framework of titles such as curriculum, method and assessment. Walcott (1994) defines the descriptive analysis as presenting data to readers on the basis of its original form and with a descriptive approach. In this research, the codes (keywords) included in documents related to FRA were determined by the researchers, and similar and meaningfully close codes were combined and themes were formed. The themes that emerged in the descriptive analysis were explained by providing direct quotations from the documents analysed.

2.1. The purpose of the study

In this study, it was aimed to discuss the FRA implemented for 1 hour every day at 21 different VIs in Turkey thoroughly in pedagogical respects. In this regard, the FRA, applied within the scope of an extra programme, was analysed in terms of content and method on the basis of cognitive and affective learning. Furthermore, it was aimed to gain an insight about the FRA applied in the Village Institutes, to contribute to a qualified Turkish education by emphasising positive studies and to direct future Turkish curricula on how to implement FRAs.

2.2. Research questions

1. What are the existing readiness levels (ERLs) of students related to life and reading when they enrolled in VIs?
2. What is the educational philosophy of the FRA?
3. How is the FRA described in the curricula of 1943–1947–1953?
4. What is/are the goal/s of the FRA?
5. Which method/s are applied in the FRA?
6. When was the VI founded and what are the books read by students in the FRA?
7. What are the cognitive, affective learning/s achieved as a result of the FRA?
8. What is the original contribution of the FRA to the identity of teachers?

The stages of the document analysis process of Forster's (1994) were taken as the basis in the study, which are as follows:

1. *Access to documents:* Books, curriculum and articles related to free reading activities were reached in Village Institutes.
2. *Checking the originality of the documents:* Expert opinions were taken on whether the curriculum and books related to free reading activities are the primary sources.
3. *Understanding the documents:* The books, curriculum and articles were first read and interpreted. After that, the second reading was made and a list of topics was prepared by creating subject titles.
4. *Analysing the data:* A descriptive analysis was carried out on the basis of the research aim, problem statement and questions.

5. *Using the data:* In the descriptive analysis process, the research questions were determined as categories. Themes related to each category have been created and presented in tables. Citations are made from the documents to explain the themes.

3. Findings

3.1. Sub-problem 1. The ERLs of students related to life and reading when they enrolled in VIs

Table 1. The theme, codes and sample statements related to students' life knowledge and literacy of ERLs

| Theme | Codes | Sample statements |
|--------------------------------|--|--|
| Existing Readiness Level (ERL) | Their vocabulary is limited and expressions are insufficient | 'They did not know the meanings of pitcher, note, printing house, balcony, frame, toilet, jar, fork, bed sheet, caricature' (İsmail Hakkı Tonguç, 2008). |
| | Their knowledge level based on experience was low. | 'There were some who did not see any newspaper' (İsmail Hakkı Tonguç, 2008). |
| | They are deprived of the basic knowledge to the extent of being frightened and disappointed. | 'We hears books such as Kesikbaş, Kan Krizi at the Booksellers of Darendeli' (Emin Özdemir). |

As seen in Table 1, students' ERLs related to life knowledge and literacy were discussed under three titles as follows: 'their vocabulary is limited and expressions are insufficient'; 'their knowledge level based on experience was low'; and 'they were deprived of the basic knowledge to the extent of being frightened and disappointed'.

'(...) The language of village children was poor in terms of vocabulary. There was not hardly any conjunction connecting sentences to each other. There was not nearly any word used to tell concrete things' (İsmail Hakkı Tonguç, 2008).

In one of his statement, Emin Özdemir told about his literacy as follows:

'(...) We saw literary works in the primary school, however, I did not consider them as a part of our blind world. I considered those people from any other planet' (Köy Enstitüleri ve Edebiyat, 2011).

A similar view is as follows:

'(...) İsmail Hakkı Baltacıoğlu gave us a conference. He mentioned about a man raising artichoke. I didn't know what artichoke was until that day, I had never seen it. Later on, I learned that it was a cabbage type vegetable' (Talip Apaydın, 2017).

Another statement related to this subject is as follows:

'(...) Enrolling in the VI was a salvation for me. I wouldn't have lived long if I hadn't enrolled. When I was a 12-year-old child, I couldn't get rid of neglect and illness. When I was a shepherd, I ate only a dried half wafer all day, and drank water heated in the arc' (Mahmut, Makal, quoted from Mehmet Bayrak, 1978).

The idea that the equality of people does not harm each other is the basic belief of the FRA. Emin Özdemir states the followings in his interview called 'Getting out of the darkness' in which he mentions that he did not know any book excluding traditional religious stories till he enrolled in school:

'(...) In my childhood, I couldn't comprehend the picture of well-groomed, smiling children in the alphabet and reading books, whose clothes were never like ours, I couldn't even believe that they lived in this world and these books were written by people, I thought it was fallen to the earth like a holy book'.

By expressing this, he criticises the delay of compulsory primary education for hundreds of years.

3.2. Sub-problem 2. Educational philosophy of the FRA

Table 2. Themes, codes and sample statements related to the FRA's educational philosophy

| Themes | Codes | Sample statements |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| Humanism | <i>Adopting works of art</i> | <i>'World Classics were translated under the leadership and initiative of Education Minister, Hasan Ali Yücel and Sabahattin Eyüpoğlu' (Şekip Tekben).</i> |
| Education for Work in Work | <i>Self-Management</i> | <i>'Making students active and conscious was the core of the principle of self-regulation' (Ferit Oğuz Bayır, 1971).</i> |
| | <i>Production-Based Teaching</i> | <i>'Intellectual production was cared. Students were encouraged in order to send literary works to magazines and publish them' (Mustafa Aydoğan, 2019).</i> |
| | <i>Organised working</i> | <i>'I was one of the 100 teachers founding the first Turkish teacher's union, Turkish Teachers' Union (TTU)' (Fakir Baykurt, 2019).</i> |

As seen in Table 2, the educational philosophy of the FRA is based on two themes: 'Humanism' and 'Education for Work in Work'. A cultural reform was carried out by Hasan Ali Yücel so that students could internalise Humanism and adopt all branches of art such as painting, music, sculpture and theatre. Some views on this are as follows:

'As a literate individual and consistent with his thought and action in political and official duty, Hasan Ali Yücel, was an education minister who turned his face to villages and told us to "read!"' (Ferit Oğuz Bayır, 1971).

'While "Plaster copies of the Parthenon Friezes", "Euripides" in reliefs, "Woman Playing the Lyre" and Hittite Lion were placed on the stage walls of the open-air theatre, of the statues, Venus de Milo was put on the garden of Village Institute' (Hürrem Arman, 2016).

As seen in Table 2, the educational philosophy of the FRA is based on the stages of 'education for work in work'. Statements on this subject are as follows:

'The works recommended to students to read should be related to the students' work and thought life' (Curriculum of 1943).

'Since schools will not teach people everything, the human being should embrace the principle of self-learning. Therefore, the FRA was applied regularly regardless of conditions' (Fakir Baykurt, 2019).

The relationship between job training and social change is the cooperative work of hand and brain and provides creativity. Tonguç argues that the civilisation begins with the work. I. According to Sefa Güner:

'(...) In addition to technical studies, works such as poetry, literature, music, entertainment, play, national games, gaining secular worldview and including democratic education to a great extent should be considered within the scope of work education' (Köy Enstitüleri Defteri, 2. 1975).

Another view on this subject:

'(...) Tonguç urges that the work education is the contemporary education which giving an end to the middle age. The person developing and changing his/her environment by doing useful works also develops and changes himself/herself, thus s/he gets rid of ongoing old thinking and belief' (Fakir Baykurt, 2019).

Related to the production-based teaching:

'(...) the creative abilities of young people were developed at the highest level at institutes. Original products were given in all branches of fine arts, from poetry to music, from painting to cinema' (Yakup Kepenek, 2000).

'(...) If learning is based on production and production is transferred to social benefit, there occurs a great positive transformation' (Fakir Baykurt, 1990).

The self-management principle of Ethem Nejat, the director of the Ottoman Education in Izmir Province, who made important reforms in teacher schools during the Balkan War, applies to the FRA:

'(...) Each book read was summarised by students and this attitude became a habit. This was the first herald of self-management' (Osman Yalçın, Tonguç'a Kitap, 1961).

Contribution of organised work to the FRA:

For example, in order to form a public opinion and to announce innovations in the institutes, Tonguç published papers and translations in every issue of the magazine of *Terbiye*. Students also published magazines and wall newspapers. Students enrolled in institutes that produced solutions on the pages of the young pens of magazines, some newspapers with their poems and writings so that villagers could get rid of their primitive conditions. Of these, some of the magazines are *Yeni Adam*, *Köy Postası*, *Köye Doğru*, *Varlık*, *Yücel*, *Fikirler* and *Demet*. A magazine branch of the High Village Institute (HVI) published a quarterly magazine of *Köy Enstitüleri*. At the 21 village institutes, research on rural areas and qualified products manufactured were published by the ministry and thus all teachers could read them. Statements on this issue are as follows:

'(...) Teachers in the institute determined their main goal as removing the oppression in people's language and brain and they led people in this respect' (Mahmut Makal, 2011, *Köy Enstitüleri ve Edebiyat*).

'We were working at the management of institute library' (Fakir Baykurt, 2019).

'Tonguç was a man of action spread throughout the country and effective on people' (Hürrem Arman, 2016).

3.3. Sub-problem 3. The FRA in VI programmes of 1943–1947–1952

Table 3. Theme, codes and sample expressions related to reading activity in the 1943–1947–1953 VI programme

| Theme | Codes | Sample statements |
|------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| Reading activity | <i>Reading on texts</i> | <i>'The intellectual and literary accumulations of people of the world allowed us to understand humanism'</i> (Tonguç, 2019). |
| | <i>Free reading</i> | <i>'Village Institutes were the school of books and world classics'</i> (Adnan Binyazar, 1990). |
| | <i>Reading out of class</i> | <i>'Institute life was based on oral and written expression'</i> (Mehmet Başaran, <i>Köy Enstitüleri ve Edebiyat</i>) |

As seen in Table 3, reading in the VI programme of 1943 was discussed under three titles: 'reading studies on texts,' 'free reading' and 'reading out of class'.

Reading on texts: Most of the reading hours would be devoted to the methodical examination of selected short texts in all classes. When selecting these texts, it would be paid attention that these texts should be short enough to be read and understood in an hour; they should not exceed the student's level of understanding; they should be selected from every areas; the texts to be reviewed within a year should be pre-determined (MEB, 1943, s. 14, 15; cited by Demircan & İnandı, 2008).

Free reading: Since there was no time to study proper reading and to enjoy a long text with the guidance of teacher, the reading lesson should sometimes be reserved only to meet this need. Most of the students coming to the institute did not yet enter the proper and meaningful reading stage (MEB, 1943, pp. 17, 18; cited by Demircan & İnandı, 2008).

Reading out of class: The teacher should distribute the books in the institute library according to the level and interest of students, and each student should be told what s/he would pay attention to in the book s/he would read. The student should be familiarised with summarising briefly the work s/he has read and, if necessary, put forward an idea about that work verbally or in writing. The works to be recommended should be related to the issues mentioned in lessons and work and thought life of students. The teacher should check students' out of class readings and apply remedies that would raise enthusiasm for students until they found the pleasure of reading (MEB, 1943, p. 18, 19; cited by Demircan & İnandı, 2008).

The Turkish 1943 and 1947 programmes and Turkish Language and Literature (1953) courses provided students with many opportunities for free reading activities as a mother tongue development study in and out of classes cited by Demircan and İnandı (2008). Reading at VIs consisted of free reading in class and free reading hours out of class. The actual free reading was carried out of class. Students could read the books given to them at that time. They shortly talked about the books they had read and got familiarised with commenting on it. Students were kept under control until they began to enjoy out of class reading. Children read every day during free reading hours and in between. Even if they were a guardian at that time, they could take their books out of their pockets and read them (Demircan, 1998).

3.4. Sub-problem 4. The purpose of the FRA

Table 4. Themes, codes and expressions related to the purpose of the FRA

| Theme | Codes | Sample statements |
|---------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| Making Active | <i>Raising Reader</i> | <i>Literary</i> 'We benefited from the richness of written language at the highest level. Reading local and foreign writers transformed the power of imagination' (Abdullah Özkuçur, 2019). |
| | <i>Critical Consciousness/Praxis</i> | 'We read and discussed together, we moved towards liberation together, we established dialogue, everyone had the right to speak' (Talip Apaydın). |

As seen in Table 4, the purpose of the FRA was addressed under the theme of making the peasant 'active' through education. For this purpose, the first step is to educate readers, to develop students' reading habits, vocabulary and enable them to use written language effectively and beautifully. It was also common to read out of class books as well as source books. Emin Özdemir and Adnan Binyazar express their views on this subject as follows:

'In Turkey, the concept of reader and literacy is mixed. The rate of literate people was not more than 5%' (Emin Özdemir, *Köy Enstitüleri ve Edebiyat*).

'The Village Institutes mean book and book is everything' (Adnan Binyazar, *Köy Enstitüleri ve Edebiyat*).

A statement related to the purpose of raising a literary reader is as follows:

'It was one of the most important task conditions for VI teachers and qualified instructors to read at least 24 works from their own country and world writers along with sources related to

their profession and work and enable their students to digest the same reading pleasure and habit' (Tonguç, 2019).

In one of circular letters issued by Tonguç for institute managers, he states followings:

'Regardless of the circumstances and season, students would be allowed to perform the FRA every day and would be given the habit of reading books' (The circular letter dated 4, 12.1944 I. Hakkı Tonguç).

Another purpose of the FRA is that teachers' high level of general cultural competence was considered as a requirement of being an enlightened group. It was aimed that teachers would solve social problems in an ethical context, on the basis of scientific knowledge, through research and examination and to educate the teachers with strong praxis that is word–action unity.

'(...) National games played in the mornings and the FRA reading hours performed in the afternoon were compulsory. Each student in the institute would listen to evening news from the radio, and watch "Yurttan Sesler" and "Geçmişte Bugün" programmes. Teachers and other personnel also participated in these activities' (Pakize Türkoğlu).

3.5. Sub-problem 5. The method applied in the FRA

Table 5. Themes, codes and sample statements related to the method applied in the FRA

| Themes | Codes | Sample statements |
|----------------------------|---|---|
| Written expression | Summarising | <i>'Complete and adequate written expression is the highest stage of the art of writing'</i> (1943 Programme). |
| Discussion and criticising | Expression of wishes and thoughts clearly | <i>'Artistic activities such as Saturday criticism meetings and theatre were the practices supporting reading activities'</i> (1943 Programme). |
| Introducing books | Following new works | <i>'One bard, one author and one poet were introduced during the FRA'</i> (Pakize Türkoğlu). |

As seen in Table 5, the method applied in the FRA is explained in three themes: 'written expression,' 'discussion and criticism' and 'introduction of books'.

The FRA is based on the written expression. The statements of two teachers on this point in the 1943 programme are as follows:

'(...) The student graduated from the institute should be able to read all types of writing such as poetry, story, memory, description, summarising and make inference and s/he should try to write such a thing' (Emin Özdemir, 1990).

'(...) As the person reads, s/he gradually begins to choose writers affecting him/her. Reading the authors of interest develops the writing tendency of people' (Talip Apaydın, 2011).

The literary characteristics of works were introduced to the institute community and other groups by thinking, discussing, expressing opinions, taking notes and making summaries on the realities mentioned in these works (Mehmet Başaran, *Köy Enstitüleri ve Edebiyat*).

'The summary analysis and criticism commission evaluated the reading studies sent by the institutes and published them as a report in Köy Enstitüleri Dergisi' (Mehmet Başaran).

'The FRA or reading hours were performed individually or altogether under the supervision of a teacher. The motivation for reading, writing, telling and criticising was always active' (Fakir Baykurt, 1990).

The FRA was carried out with the method of reading hours, summarisation based on text, discussion and criticism. Teachers raised in VI were introduced to works having an impact on the field of writing and thinking and they were enabled to gain experience from these works. In this process, the importance of affective experiences was understood and it was frequently stated that learning outcomes such as recognising human nature and providing empathy with emotions were acquired. Students' reading practices were carried out based on transferring, writing and discussing with each other. What is more, 'book introduction' was not neglected. A statement related to the 1947 programme on this subject is as follows:

'(...) In the evenings when free speeches would be performed in the institutes, the first half-hour period would be devoted to the introduction of the books considered useful for reading by institute members' (1947 Programme).

The book introduction was carried out at each issue of the magazine. It mentioned about the title, subject, original aspect, universal aspects of the book and what it told in the ethical context. The institutes had more than a thousand books even at the time of its foundation (Şahhüseyinoğlu, 2005).

3.6. Sub-problem 6. The books read by students at the FRA

Table 6. The names, places and dates of foundation of VIs in alphabetical order

| | | | | |
|------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Akçadağ/Malatya (1940) | Beşikdüzü/Trabzon (1940) | Düziçi/Adana (1940) | Hasanoğlan/Ankara (1942) | Ortaklar/Aydın (1944) |
| Akpınar/Samsun (1940) | Cilavuz/Kars (1940) | Erciş/Van (1948) | Ivriz/Konya (1941) | Pamukpınar/Sivas (1941) |
| Aksu/Antalya (1940) | Çifteler/Eskişehir (1937) | Gölköy/Kastamonu (1939) | Kepirtepe/Kırklareli (1938) | Pazarören/Kayseri (1940) |
| Arifiye/Kocaeli (1940) | Dicle/Diyarbakır (1944) | Gönen/Isparta (1940) | Kızılçullu/İzmir (1937) | Pulur/Erzurum (1942) |
| | | | | Savaştepe/Balıkesir (1940) |

Source: Gazalçı, (2018).

As stated in Table 6, the books read at the FRA are as follows: Atatürk (*The Great Speech*); İsmail Hakkı Tonguç (*Kerschensteiner*); Kerschensteiner (*Murebbinin Ruhü*); World Classics; François Rabelais (*Gargantua*); Mikhail Bakhtin (*From Carnival to Romana*); Yevtushenko (*My Life*); Maksim Gorki (*Chelkash, Old Izergil*); Anton Chekhov (*Duel*); A.S. Pushkin (*Dubrovski*); Tolstoy, Victor Hugo, Dostoyevski and Honoré de Balzac (*The Country Doctor*); Emile Zola (*Germinal*), J.J. Rousseau (*Emile*); Voltaire, Panait Istrati, Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre; Jonathan Swift (*Gulliver's Travels*); Felix Hammerlin, De Nobilitate and Plautus (*The Braggart Soldier, The Pot*); Dale Carnegie and Aldous Huxley (*Brave New World*); Gregori Petrov (*The Country of White Lilies, Idealist Teacher*); Theatre Classics; Shakespeare (*Romeo and Juliet*); Goethe (*The Sorrows of Young Werther*); Gogol (*The Overcoat, The Government Inspector*); Turkish Classics; Nazım Hikmet and Sadri Ertem (*Cikriklar Durunca*); Ebubekir Hazım Tepeyran (*Küçük Paşa*); Sabahattin Eyüpoğlu, Vedat Günyol and Sabahattin Ali (*Değirmen, Kuyucaklı Yusuf*); Yaşar Kemal, Cahit Sıtkı Tarancı, Melih Cevdet Anday and Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar (*Cadi, Gulyabani*), Cahit Kulebi, Orhan Veli, Necati Cumalı, Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, Falih Rıfkı Atay and Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu (*Yaban*); Arif Aslan, Köroğlu and Şiir ve Mitoloji (*The Iliad Odessa*)

'(...) We had always a book in the pockets of our Village Institute uniforms. We continuously read the journals of Varlık, Köye Doğru, Köy Postası' (Emin Özdemir).

3.7. Sub-problem 7. The contribution of the FRA to cognitive and affective learning

Table 7. Theme, codes and sample statements related to cognitive learning acquired in the FRA

| Theme | Codes | Sample statements |
|--------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| Cognitive Learning | <i>Analysis / Distinguish</i> | <i>'They raised their voices with their poems, village notes, stories and novels from every regions of Turkey' (Mehmet Bayrak, 1978).</i> |
| | <i>Synthesis</i> | <i>'Students were encouraged to tell the realities lived at the village and institute in writing' (1943 Programme).</i> |

As seen in Table 7, the highest contribution of the FRA to cognitive learning is 'analysis' and 'synthesis'.

The ability of 'analysis' is to distinguish a phenomenon from a value judgment or to distinguish a prejudiced statement from an objective value judgment and to distinguish right from wrong, the appropriate one from the inappropriate one, the necessary one from the unnecessary one (VI Programmes, 1936–1953).

The FRA consists of reading, writing, correction, thinking about and discussing the realities mentioned. It can be said that this method contributes to students' distinguish/analysis cognitive abilities at a high level. The VI programme also supported the abilities seen in different fields. Therefore, students could develop their relational/contextual thinking abilities. The statements uttered by teachers related to how the ability of 'analysis' developed are as follows:

'(...) Jan Paul Sartre states that do you have something valuable as much as to be told to anybody. He brings a wise measure to the need to write' (Ferthi Esendal, 1983).

'(...) We were humble peasant children selected by the VI for higher education. We did not have so many superiorities. However, the system selected us in a rational way and raised us in a rich and versatile educational environment was actually superior. There were many books at the institutes. The FRA and reading hour were included in the programme. The book was considered as a need like water and bread' (Türkoğlu, 1990).

In the work titled *'Köy Enstitüleri ve Edebiyat'*, Abdullah Özkuçur mentions about the learning outcomes gained by students related to the level of 'synthesis' as follows:

'If a student was able to understand the essence of a text when s/he was graduating from the institute, and if s/he was able to express his/her wishes and thoughts verbally or in writing without making any spelling, dialect, grammar mistake, if s/he learned to overcome the difficulties s/he would encounter in reading, writing and speaking himself/herself and if s/he made reading and writing an enjoyable habit in everyday life, it meant that Turkish teaching was realised' (Özkucur, 2011).

Table 8. Theme, codes and sample statements related to affective learning acquired in the FRA

| Theme | Codes | Sample statements |
|--------------------|-----------------|--|
| Affective Learning | Empathy | <i>'Grigory Petrov's novel titled "The Black Eagle" in which the life of Booker Washington is subjected was exhibited in Mahmudiye, the importance of such activities was undeniable in developing empathy' (Konur, 1990).</i> |
| | Persuasiveness | <i>'Tonguç had a great persuasion capability. I think there were very few people knowing Tonguç and didn't get connected to his ideal, and didn't get fascinated by his dreams' (İbrahim Yasa, Tonguç'a Kitap, 1960).</i> |
| | Altruism | <i>'Teachers should engage in all the works that would strengthen and develop altruism' (İsmail Hakkı Tonguç)</i> |
| | Collective work | <i>'Radio was listened to altogether every day and newspaper magazines were read by sharing with others' (Fakir Baykurt, 2019).</i> |

As stated in Table 8, the contribution of the FRA to affective learning is explained in four sub-titles: 'empathy,' 'persuasiveness,' 'altruism' and 'collective work'. The FRA carried out everyday increased reading motivation and reading became an enjoyable habit of everyday life. It can be said that this dimension corresponds to the satisfaction stage in the response of the affective field. Talip Apaydın states his views on this in an interview as follows:

'(...) I read Tolstoy's novel named after "Family Happiness" when I was 12. I did not understand anything. Later on, I discovered Sabahattin Ali by chance. I liked and was shaken by Sabahattin Ali's stories so much. I started to think about Sabahattin Ali's stories day and night, and this prompted me about my tendency to write' (Talip Apaydin, 2011, *Köy Enstitüleri ve Edebiyat*).

Mahmut Makal (2019) states following on this issue:

'We started to publish little writings at VI magazine and developed first the habit of interest and listening'.

The teachers in VIs were writing very persuasive things about village reality. One of the views related to this is as follows:

'Mahmut Makal was convincingly writing about the aspects of village that had never been written before. These writings had an attitude of not obeying the commands'.

The FRA created an atmosphere specific to these institutions like 'cooperative work'. One view related to this is as follows:

'Since there were not enough magazines for hundreds of students in the institutes, Turkish teachers summarised and read the magazines every Monday for one hour and announced what was going on in the literature world' (Fakir Baykurt, 2019).

3.8. Sub-problem 8. The original contribution or effect of the FRA on teacher identity

Table 9. Theme, code and sample statement regarding the original contribution of the FRA to teacher identity

| Theme | Codes | Sample statement |
|-----------------|------------------------|---|
| Person of Ideal | Grotesque Folk Culture | <i>'The grotesque elements of folk culture were used in the literary field'</i> . |

As seen in Table 9, the original contribution of the FRA to teacher identity is that teachers define themselves as 'persons of ideal'.

'Adopting the ideal of making village active is the way of liberation. Teachers proved that they loved their job and they were committed to national ideals not by words but by their jobs' (Tonguç, 2019).

'Those serving for ten consecutive years in the education, agriculture and art works of the village and those showing an extraordinary success in these works are considered as the person of ideal' (*Köy Okulları ve Enstitüleri Teşkilat Kanunu İzahnamesi*, 1943).

As seen in Table 9, the 'grotesque' elements of folk culture found place in the literary filed by the help of writers who graduated from VIs. In these works, carnival elements, images and narratives were used. The village life with humour, joy and cooperative work was discussed in terms of folk culture point of view. Folk culture, the main element of the European Renaissance and based on humour, shows a universal characteristic within the historical dimension of human culture. The nature of folk

culture showing identical or similar characteristics throughout the world cannot be divided and broken by the continents separated with national borders and seas (Akçam, 2011).

These teacher writers wrote the literary products by using grotesque folk culture. The products of writers from VIs have populist characteristics. It is to transform the elements of a literary product related to concrete concepts, such as subject, person, place, time etc., from the public life to the literature (Emin Özdemir, 50. Yılında Köy Enstitüleri, 1990). Some similar views on this are as follows:

'(...) Feelings, pains, and types of our people and human dignity and consciousness began to be subjected in novels with Talip Apaydın' (Emin Özdemir, Köy Enstitüleri ve Edebiyat).

'(...) Yelatan (1972), the first novel of Ümit Kaftancıoğlu, took its subject from the region... Kaplumbağalar (1967), taking its subject from the observations and impressions of the author when he was a supervisor of primary education in Ankara districts, emphasises the victory of creative power of the peasant on the nature' (Kemal Burak, Köy Enstitülü Yazarlar ve Ozanlar, TOB-DER, 1978).

'(...) Public life is an unending source for an author. An author should know all public classes closely. S/he should enter into their lives, understand them and hear like them. S/he should participate in their angers, consider their friends as his/her own friends and should do this by feeling and sincerely' (Yusuf Ziya Bahadın, Köy Enstitülü Yazarlar ve Ozanlar, TOB-DER, 1978).

4. Discussion, conclusion and recommendations

In the 1940s, there was an administrative group of people, such as Vasif Çınar, Mustafa Necati, Reşit Galip, Saffet Arıkan, Nafi Atuf Kansu, İsmail Hakkı Tonguç and Hasan Ali Yücel, who could be characterised as the leading figures of that period. It was a bright period in which elementary school teaching gained reputation and value as a profession. This group of people acted as visionary leaders in order to raise the teachers who were Kemalist and having great Turkish ideals. On the basis of the republic, it is a very important attitude for the intellectuals to take responsibility. Since the 2nd Constitutional Monarchy (1908) period, which aimed to establish the public administration, reform works were carried out starting from the İstanbul Teacher Training School (Tonguç, 2000). In addition, Çelebi (2014) states that the educational environment created during the Constitutional Monarchy period had significant developments with the youth to be raised and the knowledge–power relationship between them. The highest virtue is reading. The most important responsibility of a citizen is to avoid falling into the trap of illiteracy. Students gained a long established reading and thinking habit in the institutes. The teachers in the VIs considered themselves as 'the persons of ideal'. They read and wrote much due to the responsibility of being intellectual.

There were at least 1,000 students in these VIs. The services of institutes were shared with the students by turns, not by the employees as in other schools. The students would criticise and evaluate subjects and issues on the agenda during the Saturday Meetings, which was the Institutes' parliament. For this reason, practices such as cooperative work, effective democratic participation, humanism, education for work in work, innovation and criticism were the characteristics of the institution-specific atmosphere. Students were raised in a critical, liberal environment that is open to all kinds of dialectical dialogue.

In these 14-year educational institutions, teachers were educated based on the understanding of humanism through the FRA in order to internalise Turkish and World works and to know what

aesthetic anxiety is. Artistic practices based on folk culture, such as theatre, music and zeybek dances (bengi, arpazlı and güvende), especially the FRA, contributed much to the enlightenment of institute teachers and thus institute teachers could produce works crossing the borders of their country. Some of these authors are as follows: Adnan Binyazar, Mahmut Makal, Fakir Baykurt, Dursun Akçam, Talip Apaydın, Emin Özdemir, Enver Atılgan, Nebi Dadaloğlu, Mehmet Başaran, Behzat Ay, Yusuf Ziya Bahadın, Osman Bolulu and Ümit Kaftancıoğlu.

Raising literary readers is a part of the educational activities at the institute. The FRA is a programme design supporting the enrichment of intellectual, emotional, social and aesthetic developments. The main purpose of education in the village is problem of selecting and preparing the books to be read during free reading hours in a well manner. The FRA has two functions: creating readers with critical consciousness and raising the generation of writer teachers. The free reading was carried out both during and out of class times. The FRA consists of methods based on discussion and writing. Makal (2001) states that establishing reading habits, reading activities, free reading hours and books and bookshelves are the most important works of these institutes. The students learning to analyse text introduced the classics they read in institute magazines, and intellectual Yaşar Nabi Nayır sincerely encouraged teachers raised in the Village Institutes to publish their writings and poems and to analyse villages and related problems in the art magazine of *Varlık* (Makal, 2001). All of these practices contributed much to the high level cognitive and affective learning of the students.

The teachers who graduated from Village Institutes were hard-working and work lovers. They gained international recognition by acquiring experience from works having shocking effects in the field of writing and thinking. With literary products, acquisitions such as gaining insight into the human nature and providing empathy with feelings were achieved. In Turkish teaching, the FRA has the purpose of developing students' existing understanding, writing and expression skills. Education is the process of revealing potential abilities of human beings. Poor peasant children were the teacher resource of VIs. Students of this socio-economic class had the opportunity to develop their potential abilities in institutes. Tonguç (2008) urges that although village children had a poor vocabulary, they had extraordinary simple and colourful language skills. Unfortunately, this value of the child is often ignored at schools. The child is taught a language containing many abstract words and long sentences which are completely unfamiliar. The child is ashamed and hesitates to speak in front of the teacher speaking a language different than his/her own. For this reason, the richness of written language was mostly used in the FRA. Teachers coming from the bottom of the pyramid achieved the top of the intellectual pyramid.

The teaching practices supporting each other based on the principle of conformity to life had a positive effect on the students' high level of cognitive and affective learning such as criticism, analysis, synthesis, commitment and organisation with a set of values. Intellectual teachers were graduated from the VIs, from which a total of 17,000 students were graduated, and many teachers gained the identity of artists and writers. These teachers graduated as teachers from the village's own human resources, which existed by continuing to write on village reality. The most important of these works is Mahmut Makal's *'Bizim Köy'* published in 1950. As Aysal (2005) states, people living in villages changed their destiny with a conscious leadership in light of science. The purpose was to create a liberating civilised identity. Altunya (2014) argues that the main objective of the VI system is to liberate an individual. It is to liberate the mind, thought and behaviour. Liberation of mind and thought is possible through scientific and democratic education. The FRA is an artistic, scientific and democratic education.

The philosophy of education on which the FRA is based is humanism and education for work in work. The FRA is based on modern educational principles. There are studies based on reading, writing, criticism and discussion such as issuing a magazine, establishing a library, repairing worn out books in a handcraft painting workshop, owning a personal library and encouraging the students to be developed to establish a library and a bookcase. It is seen that books are selected carefully during the reading hours supporting the enrichment of intellectual, emotional, social and aesthetic developments. When Tonguç was working as the deputy manager of Gazi Institute of Education in 1934–1935 school year, he struggled to allow students to benefit from the libraries regularly. For this reason, he prepared regulations and curriculum of the institution so that works could be published through school cooperative and selected works from the world literature could be read (*Tonguç'a Kitap*, 1961).

Regardless of the type of programme, the goal of all curricula is to educate effective citizens and to provide relational/contextual and critical thinking. The main purpose of the curricula implemented in the FRA was to revive the nation. Arman (2016) states that the concept of 'revitalisation' is explained by founder İsmail Hakkı Tonguç, who prepared the laws and directives of the VIs, as a suggestion that 'liberation of poor people can be achieved on the basis of people's own power with an application covering the whole country'. Critically thinking citizens know how to use their right of sovereignty. They solve the conflict between the oppressed and oppressor by referencing Freire. Those who liberate themselves liberate those who oppress themselves.

The FRA reading hours were abolished since 1946. Freely read books and magazines were taken under control and it was forbidden to defend ideas and arguments. The curricula were separated from the business philosophy and societies were developing structures. The educators of the period implementing the FRA created an original model of education appropriate to the social reality of the people and in accordance with their educational needs. In the solution of economic, political and social problems, they built a great educational mobilisation so that village teachers could understand what is consciousness, how to analyse economic, political and social conflicts, to ensure their liberation and to free them from being oppressed. Their students addressed them as 'man of public' and 'Father Tonguç'. Individuals have the conscious of democracy and live in a principled manner in developed societies. Democratic societies consist of citizens who are continuously reading, criticising and forming public opinion. Societies need people who can express their opinions clearly and produce something. In order to act in the light of reason, educational institutions must be the places where free thought is supported to a great extent. Otherwise, societies will become a group of people that could be easily exploited.

After the free reading activities in the Village Institutes, the Ministry of National Education published a circular numbered B.08.O.APK.0.03.01.00 / 3126 on 19 August 2004. In this circular, independent from textbooks, a list under the title '100 Essential Readings', which includes Turkish and world children's and youth literature products, was proposed for primary and secondary education students. Therefore, students read these books within the scope of Turkish and literature lessons. However, there are research findings related with teachers and students views in the literature indicating that the application of 100 Essential Readings activities is not efficient. According to the research findings of Arıcan and Yılmaz (2010), teachers do not think that 100 Essential Readings is effective for students. Teachers revealed that the students did not read the books in the 100 Essential Readings with interest and enthusiasm. Karakaş (2013) aimed to determine what students think about 100 Essential Readings in her research and evaluated the students' reading attitudes. The findings of this study support the

opinions of the teachers and revealed that the books in the list of 100 Essential Readings were not read by students. As it is seen, it is not possible to say that the practice of 100 Essential Readings is as successful as free reading activities in Village Institutes.

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