

EDUCATIONAL SPACES FOR GIRLS IN TURKEY: REFİA ÖVÜÇ MATURATION INSTITUTE

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ABSTRACT

This research focuses on alternative educational approaches for girls in Turkey. To thoroughly examine this subject in a detailed way, a representative showcase of the first institute, Refia Övüç Maturation Institute, is selected. In the context of this study, a chronological overview of the girl's educational alternatives is presented. This part predominantly studies the educational attempts for girls in Republican Turkey and focuses on the maturation institutes. This was related to the idea of visibility of the modern, fashionable new Turkish woman. In these institutes, the interior quality varied, but there is still a gap in the literature regarding these interiors. To bridge this gap, it is aimed at finding out samples for the interiors of the institutes. To achieve this, in this study, multiple research methods are employed. Firstly, for analyzing the interiors of girls' institutes, existing literature is used. Secondly, for the case study part, the interiors of maturation institutions have been undertaken with the help of old photographs, archival records of the institutions, and personal archives of the graduates of the institutes. The current conditions of the interiors and possible transformations are also analyzed. Old photographs obtained from archive records were used to observe and understand the original interior organization and atmosphere of the institute/s. Within the scope of this study, interior spaces were observed with the help of existing literature and photographs in the records. It can be said that in these spaces, the original design approaches followed by the designers of the period were not encountered, and rational and functional language was mostly dominant.

Keywords: Modernization of Education, Education of Girls, Maturation Institute, Girls Institute, Interior Space.

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TÜRKİYE'DE KIZLAR İÇİN EĞİTİM MEKÂNLARI: REFİA ÖVÜÇ OLGUNLAŞMA ENSTİTÜSÜ

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ÖZET

Bu araştırma, Türkiye'de kızlar için alternatif eğitim yaklaşımlarına odaklanmaktadır. Bu konuyu derinlemesine incelemek adına, ilk olgunlaşma enstitüsü olan Refia Övüç Olgunlaşma Enstitüsü, vaka analizi için seçilmiştir. Bu çalışma bağlamında, kızların eğitim alternatiflerine kronolojik bir bakış sunulmuştur. Burada, esas olarak Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türkiye'sinde kızlar için eğitim girişimleri incelenmiş ve olgunlaşma enstitülerine odaklanılmıştır. Bu eğitim alternatifleri de modern, modaya uygun yeni Türk kadınının görünürlük fikriyle ilişkilendirilmiştir. Bahsi geçen enstitülerde, rastlanılan iç mekân kalitesi çeşitlilik gösterse de literatürde hala bu iç mekânlara odaklanan çalışmalar bağlamında bir boşluk bulunmaktadır. Bu noktada literatüre katkı sunabilmek adına, çalışma kapsamında, enstitülerin iç mekânlarına dair örnekler bulunması amaçlanmıştır. Bu amaca ulaşmak için, çalışmada çeşitli araştırma yöntemleri kullanılmıştır. İlk olarak, kız enstitülerinin iç mekânlarını analiz etmek için mevcut literatürden yararlanılmıştır. İkincil olarak ise vaka çalışması yapılmış, bu bölüm için olgunlaşma enstitülerinin iç mekânları, enstitülerin eski fotoğrafları, kurumların arşiv kayıtları ve enstitü mezunlarının kişisel arşivleri kullanılmıştır. İç mekânların mevcut durumu ve olası dönüşümleri de analiz edilmiştir. Arşiv kayıtlarından elde edilen eski fotoğraflar, enstitünün/lerin özgün iç mekân organizasyonunu ve atmosferini izlemek, anlamak için kullanılmıştır. Bu çalışma kapsamında mevcut literatür ve kayıtlardaki fotoğraflar yardımıyla iç mekanlar gözlemlenmiştir. Bu mekânlarda dönemin tasarımcıları tarafından izlenen özgün tasarım yaklaşımlarına rastlanmadığı, çoğunlukla rasyonel ve fonksiyonel bir dilin hâkim olduğu söylenebilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Eğitimin Modernizasyonu, Kızların Eğitimi, Olgunlaşma Enstitüsü, Kız Enstitüsü, İç Mekân.

Tür: Araştırma Makalesi

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1. INTRODUCTION

In periods of societal transformation, it is observed that education assumes a pivotal role in portraying the contours of the emerging social structure. In Turkey, much significance was accorded to the field of education after the establishment of the Republic. During this transformation, it should be understood that a traditional society which was characterized by Islamic values had turned into a modern, westernized society. Here it is possible to mention that social, economic, cultural, and political changes transpired in this era. As a consequence of these changes, men and women participated in daily life nearly equally over time. Since education constitutes a focal point within the intersection of the main concepts of change in modern societies, it is underlined in this study. Also, after the declaration of the Republic of Turkey, education has become a primary issue that is supposed to be improved soon to modernize the country. The initiation of Turkey's modernization should have started with a collective mindset transformation. It should be emphasized that the above-mentioned societal transformation process was mostly visible through the participation of women in daily life through the public sphere. Before, men were the dominant figures in urban life, while women were mostly associated with domestic life and socializing with other women. After the proclamation of the Republic, the image of modern Turkish women was promoted. Turkish women started to access different educational levels and appear more in public. It displays a contrast to the image of Muslim women/Ottoman-veiled women, who are indispensable figures of domestic life.

Even if the educational system underwent significant changes during the early Republican era, it is possible to see the rise of modernization ideas in education in the Reforms Period (Tanzimat Period) (1839-1876). In this period, the focus was on the necessity of the replacement or the modification of the religious schools (Smallwood, 2002) which were primary schools, madrasahs and ulema. The modernization of the educational system was first based on a French model, related to *Maarif-i Umumiye Nizamnamesi* (the Regulation of Public Education) in 1869. Under the rule of Sultan Abdulhamid II (1876-1909) Ben Fortna's research on education was emphasized, and as a consequence, *idadi* (a high school) was established. In the meantime, it is possible to mention private foreign language schools like Galatasaray Lisesi as an important alternative for wealthy families. Until then, these educational facilities were mostly designed for the education of boys. There were some exceptional foreign private schools as educational alternatives for girls who were under eleven, from wealthy families in the late 19th century such as *Amerikan Koleji kız kısmı. Rüşdiye* (the first middle school for girls), on the other hand, was established in 1861 with the following announcement in newspapers:

"Women should be educated in the same way as men. This will enable them to support their husbands who shoulder the responsibility of providing for the family. It will encourage them to be dutiful wives and, above all, it will serve to protect their honor" (as cited in Smallwood, 2002).

The rest of the girls from these wealthy families were receiving home education from private tutors during this period. In 1873, there were eight Ottoman *rüşdiye* giving girls moral education, teaching them reading, writing, history, geography, sewing, embroidery and general knowledge. In 1880, an *idadi* for girls was established to teach foreign languages, music, and embroidery. Since the main purpose of *idadi* was to educate potential bureaucrats for the empire, girls were not included in the system, mostly due to

the fact that there was not a plan to educate the girls for civil administration. This paved the way for a lack of interest in the school. Therefore, they were closed down.

An important institution; *islahhane* was established in the Ottoman Empire to provide vocational education to orphaned and impoverished children, which later evolved into art schools (Öztürk, 1999) and was initially exclusive to boys. Later, Midhat Paşa opened a reform institution/ rehabilitation center in Ruse for girls as well as boys in the last period of the 19th century (around 1870s). The girls' center was established alongside the boys' center to provide shelter and education for the orphaned kids of the province. Here, boys were taught courses like blacksmithing, carpentry, printing, and bookbinding while girls were having piano, and literate lessons in addition to sewing and embroidery. It is understood that this institute accepted only local and foreign, Muslim and non-Muslim girls who were not older than ten years and who were orphaned (Atam and Candeğer, 2020).

Then, it is important to underline that the number of instructors and teachers in these institutions was limited. *Darülmualimat* (the women's teacher training college) was the only way to become a female instructor. An important progress in the education of girls in the empire was the very limited acceptance of girls to Istanbul University in 1914, which had accepted only boys for a very long time (Smallwood, 2002). All these show that, after the Tanzimat Period, modest but various steps -short-term or long-term- were taken towards the participation of female students in education in Turkey. It is possible to claim that these changes started to influence the role of women in social life, and these steps might also be considered socio-political strategies. However, the main decisions about women participating in life, not only in a domestic context but also in professional life, were taken after the proclamation of the Republic. To sum up, the perception of women was not only related as a part of domestic life anymore; it was also focused on their presence in the realms of education and professional life alongside men.

The first attempt in this context was the establishment of girls' institutes in the late 1920s, in the early Republican period. In this period, when other educational phases such as primary schools are analyzed, it is understood that mostly rational templates for the schools are being used both in the country and city. These templates are created by the figures who will be prominent actors of Turkish modernism later such as Sırrı Arif Bilen, Asım Mutlu. In the meantime, there were international figures, for example, Robert Vorhoelzer, Bruno Taut as architectural consultants in the process (Kul, 2011).

The developments in the education of girls continued with alternative approaches later. *Köy enstitüleri* (village institutes) and *olgunlaşma enstitüleri* (maturation institutes) are among these alternative approaches. It should be underlined that village institutes were for both girls & boys but maturation institutes were only for girls. These two institutes were different in terms of their context. While village institutes educate the students from the rural areas for the improvement of rural life in a collective way through theoretical & practical knowledge, maturation institutes on the other hand play a critical role in shaping Turkish education and the prospects of women, fostering a more inclusive and equitable society. Maturation institutes are not among the focused subjects in literature, so to contribute to the existing literature, they are underlined in the upcoming parts of the text in a detailed way in addition to the other alternatives. The village institutes, which were developed in rural areas in line with Turkey's modernization goals, were designed by prominent architects of the period such as Ahsen Yapanar, (Ekinci

Dağtekin, 2020) Mualla Eyüboğlu, Asım Mutlu (Çetin and Kahya, 2017), Recai Akçay through national architectural competitions (Yeşiltepe and Çorakbaşı, 2022). One of the important aspects of these competitions was the possibility to give a chance to young Turkish architects of the era to design a modernist phase of Turkey. Since village institutes were mostly designed by architects through competitions, a good architectural quality is realized.

When a literature review is conducted, it is possible to follow the education of women in Turkey through the resources of different disciplines, such as sociology or history. In the context of the design and architecture fields, these resources seem to be very limited. On the other hand, another issue about the education of women might be related to the spatial characteristics of educational buildings. Some examples especially that underline the improvements of women's education and the educational spaces in published media, such as *La Turquie Kemaliste* magazine in 1935 and 1936. However, these articles and the visuals that are obtained from the achievement do not emphasize on the spatial organization or the characteristics of these buildings. They are announcing the improvements in this context as a way to underline the new position of women in society.

Therefore, it is understood that there is a gap in the literature regarding the education of girls in Turkey in the context of architecture and interior design and this study aims to bridge this gap through different samples of educational institutions. This research mentions the improvement of alternative educational approaches for girls (Figure 1) in Turkey in a historical way and tries to explore these educational spaces in terms of their spatial quality, architecture, and interior organization.

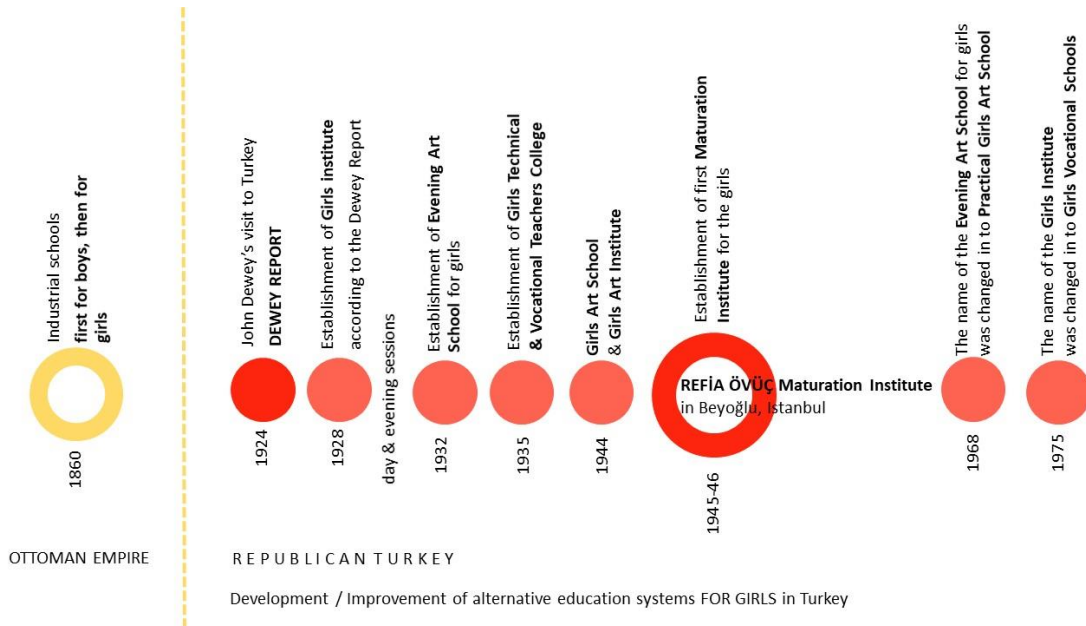


Figure 1. Scheme of the educational alternatives for girls in the history of Turkey.

1.1. Materials and methods of the study

This study uses a qualitative method of research, a combination of a literature review that is focused on primary and secondary sources. First a chronological analysis of the education alternatives of girls, which examines the era between the late Ottoman Period and the late Republican Period is overhauled. Here, at this stage, books, articles, dissertation theses were used. The visual analysis is done with the help of the photographs of a former graduate student of Zonguldak Girls Institute, Emel Aslan's personal archive. Also, images from social media platforms are employed to see the variety of the girls institutes from different regions. Therefore, different Facebook groups are used to collect visuals of the institutes. Images collected from magazines such as *La Turquie Kemaliste* & postcards of the period obtained from Salt Research Institute were also used as databases to capture the layered dynamics of the topic.

Here, the historical background of the educational centers that specifically serve girls will be analyzed, starting with the late Ottoman Empire. This chronological part predominantly focuses on the related educational attempts for girls in Republican Turkey, starting with educational expert John Dewey's visit to Turkey in 1924. This led to educational reports with suggestions for the Turkish educational system. Since the Turkish government had invited Dewey immediately after the foundation of the Turkish Republic, it is evident that there was a deliberate emphasis on the education system, specifically on girls, who had been mostly neglected in terms of public education due to the strict privacy concerns and politics of the Ottoman Empire for a very long time. As a consequence of the new nation's policies, the Turkish Republic took Dewey's ideas and suggestions very seriously.

The focus of this study is to underline the improvement of alternative educational approaches for girls in Turkey by exploring the traces of the interiors of the mentioned educational spaces. To thoroughly examine this subject in a detailed way, a representative showcase, Refia Övüç Maturation Institute, is selected. Refia Övüç was a notable contributor to girls' education in Turkey, and this institution set a successful example for the upcoming girls' maturation institutions. Refia Övüç Maturation Institute was also the first Maturation Institute in Turkey. Despite significant changes over time, this institute continues to operate as a school for girls in Beyoğlu, Istanbul.

A wide literature review in various fields, such as architecture, interior architecture, and the education system of the era, was conducted in the context of this study. Visuals that are obtained from the personal archives of the graduates and the teachers of the institutes and different archives and databases are analyzed to visualize the entire atmosphere of the era. Here, social, cultural background and design characteristics, interior features are examined. Since there is a gap in the literature on the interiors of girls and women's educational spaces, this topic is intentionally selected. Finally, Refia Övüç Maturation Institute was selected as a case study. The institute's archival records, personal archives, and several images from the institute's social media account are used to understand the different phases of the institute. It should be noted that despite the promising studies emphasizing interior space in the recent past, there is still a lack of sufficient comprehensive research on the subject in terms of architectural historiography in Turkey. With the help of this research, it is aimed at contributing to the existing limited literature. In this way, tracking the change in interiors over time has become possible.

2. ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION FOR GIRLS DURING REPUBLICAN TURKEY

"We strongly hope that our schools will be worthy of our nation and deserving of an exceptional womanhood."

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, Nutuk (The Speech), 1927

In the early 1920s, education in Turkey was one of the most injured, problematic, and outdated elements because the country was occupied for a long time. When the Turkish Republic was founded, even 10% of the society was not literate. The enrollment rate in primary education was around 20%. To solve these problems without wasting any time, the Ministry of Education was established on May 3, 1920. While the Republic of Turkey was trying to solve the problems inherited from the Ottoman Empire, on the other hand, they wanted to integrate some innovations into the national education system according to the developments in the world (Kaya, 2022). The focal points that the new Republican government concentrated on were political ideology in education and control over religious education. Students were taught the tenets of Kemalist ideology, emphasizing secularism, nationalism, and modernization. The goal was to create a new generation of citizens with these values. While secularization was a priority, the state retained control over religious education. Religious courses were offered in state-controlled schools, but religious institutions' influence was greatly reduced. Also, the other main topics of the government were the centralization and secularization of education (gender equality in education), language and alphabet reforms, vocational and technical education, teacher training, and curriculum (Kaya, 2022) (Figure 2).

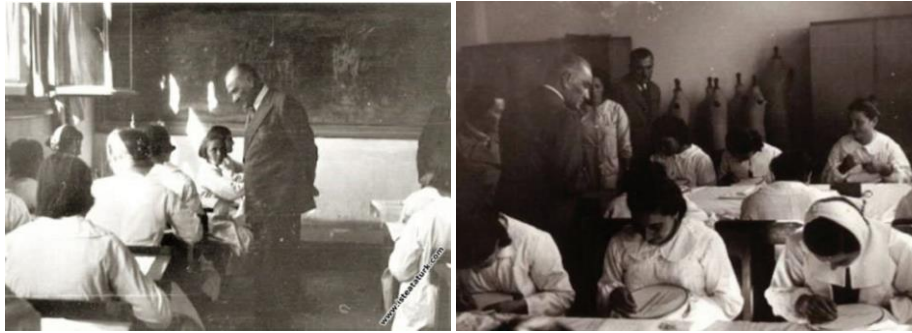


Figure 2. Atatürk visiting girls' institutes (Büyükcınar, 2015).

When the educational attempts for girls in Republican Turkey were investigated, it was realized that there was a deliberate emphasis on the education system, specifically on girls who had been mostly neglected in terms of public education due to the strict privacy concerns and politics of the Ottoman Empire on girls for a very long time. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk gave importance to this issue, and the Turkish government invited John Dewey who was an American educational expert to Turkey. He visited Turkey in 1924 and he wrote educational reports with suggestions for the Turkish educational system (Ata, 2001). In Dewey's educational philosophy, there is a formulation known as experiential learning, which incorporates the concept of experience (Kaya, 2022). John Dewey conducted a series of examinations in Istanbul, Ankara, and Bursa, which included high schools, teacher training schools, and vocational associations and institutions. Later, he presented his observations in a report titled "A Report on Turkish Education" and

he provided information about the Ministry of Education's organization, teacher training, vocational education, and the system and order of schools. He also wrote his suggestions for the Turkish educational system in this report. There, he proposed the establishment of an institute that would provide education in home management, commerce, vocational, and social sciences and also underlined that there was a need to institute compulsory primary education for girls with boys (Ata, 2001). After his leave the developments in the country continued; the establishment of village institutes was one of these important points. So, when he returned to our country in 1945 and examined Hasanoğlan Village Institute, he expressed his gratitude. During his visits to England and America, he expressed that the schools that he had envisioned were established in Turkey under the name of village institutes. He mentioned that these institutes would be a proper model for the world's education system (Arslantaş et al., 2010).

As a result of Dewey's report in the 1920s, the İsmet Paşa Girls' Institute was founded in Ankara (Figure 3). The school commenced its education in 1928 under the administration of the Child Welfare Organization and later served as a model for the Girls' Institutes that were subsequently opened. The İsmet Paşa Girls' Institute, which was a technical and vocational school, limited the career alternatives of women mostly to professional housewives, milliners, tailors, and teachers in training schools for the courses (Kılınç, 2013). These courses covered handicrafts such as sewing and cutting out, fashion and hat making, household economics and cooking, embroidery and white sewing, fashion and model painting, milk making, and home agriculture (Gürol, 2003). Although these courses were nourishing Turkish girls to be modern women with lots of abilities, they were also limiting their potential. These girls were supposed to become only "ideal women," homemakers, and mothers (Baydar, 2002). Another important issue about this institute was its being designed by Ernst Egli who was the Ministry of Education's chief architect in late 1920s. Egli, who was invited to the new Turkish Republic to expand the effect of newly-arisen modernist architectural vocabulary, designed prominent showcases of the era, including the institute. In this case, Egli, in the context of both volumetric expression and interior spatial quality, followed the latest international design trends of the era. This four-story building had the aesthetic canons of modernist architecture, such as flat roofs, rounded corners, large windows, undecorated walls, and continuous balconies, which could be observed in other public buildings as well (Figure 4).



Figure 3. Students of the İsmet İnönü institute & different class examples of the institute (*La Turquie Kemaliste*, 1935).



Figure 4. Ismet Paşa Girls' Institute (İsmet Paşa Girls' Institute postcard, 1930).

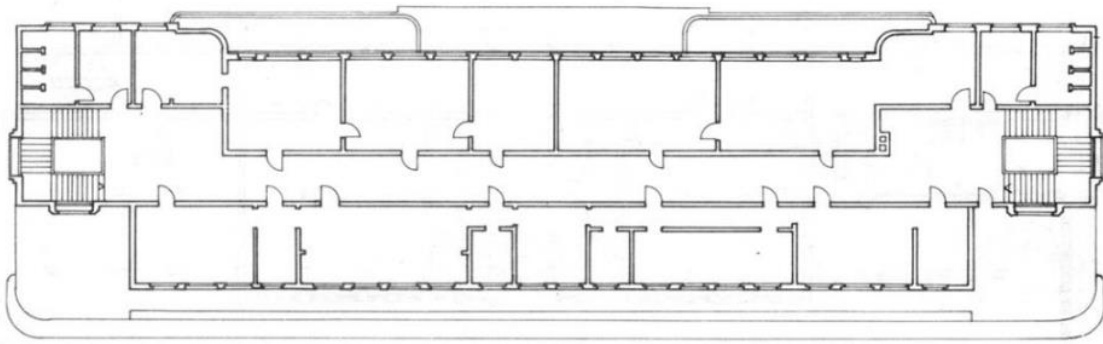


Figure 5. İsmat Paşa Girls' Institute, rational/functional plan organization (Dere, 2021).

In the program of this building, there were regular classrooms, offices, workshops, meeting rooms, a conference hall, and a teachers' room. When the interiors were investigated through the images of *La Turquie Kemaliste*, modern equipped classrooms, and workshops within a rational order were detected. When the plan of the floors was analyzed, a central hall that divided the space into two was realized. This hall, which aligns the rooms and workshops, creates a symmetry axis for the building. Another point to be underlined here is the relations of the classes; on the upper part of the plan, bigger spaces are related to their adjacent points, and the below classes are related with the help of a secondary, narrower hall (Figure 5).

As a direct outcome of the educational reports by Dewey, the concept of the Girls Institute became concrete in 1928. In addition to the example in Ankara, there were others in different cities, such as Necatibey Institute in Bursa (Figure 6), Cumhuriyet Institute in Izmir, and Kadıkoy Institute in Istanbul, as well as in Elazığ, Adana, Trabzon, Afyon, and Manisa (Gürol, 2003). In these cases, a functional and rational organization was realized. However, the architectural language of the buildings could not compete with the Ismet Paşa Girls' Institute designed by Egli. Here, a more modest design had been realized. When the interiors were examined, the spatial quality and interior elements did not mostly fulfill the requirements

of modern educational activities. Unlike the İsmet Paşa Institute, examples in the country do not follow modernist international trends. In these cases, limited budgets affected the spatial quality. But, in the simple, plain interiors with standard, ready-made furniture that was trying to serve different functions, girls were being educated (Akbulut, 2010; Kır Şimşek, 2019).



Figure 6. Necati Bey Girls' Institute in Bursa, rational/functional plan organization of the façade & educational activities of girls by the supervision of the instructors (Özal, 2023).

Over time, aiming to facilitate increased participation in addition to day sessions, evening sessions were included as an alternative (Soydan Erdemir, 2002). Also, many different institutional versions, such as art schools, emerged. In 1934, an inter-ministerial commission was established, and a decision was made to establish girls' institutes in every province and to expand evening girls' art schools to towns (Akın, 2011). Village institutes and maturation institutes were among these examples of different institutes. The main difference between these two was the fact that maturation institutes were accepting only girls, while village institutes accepted both girls and boys. Another important difference was that village institutes were located in the villages, while maturation institutes were located in the city centers. Also in the village institutes, the purpose of education was mostly related to agricultural and rural activities to equip the young generation (Kır Şimşek and Akandere, 2021).

The primary goals of establishing village institutes were to ensure nationwide primary education, equip rural populations with practical skills, and enhance productive life through organized efforts. Additionally, the institutes aimed to bring about social transformation by fostering solidarity-based communication

between the school and the village. They sought to guide villagers in cultivating fertile land, particularly through the establishment of institute fields on unproductive lands (Figure 7). Furthermore, the institutes aimed to promote sustainability in both education and production by enrolling village children and raising awareness among villagers about their citizenship rights. Embracing an educational approach grounded in practical experience, the institutes aimed to create a productive school environment and prepare villagers for future land reforms, with the ultimate goal of organizing production effectively (Akdoğan, 2016).



Figure 7. Female students learning apiculture & anchoring as a part of hands-on experience of the institute (Esen, Akandere, 2021).

In the institutes, education was conducted with a focus on work and production by grouping students and employing a communal approach. The classes were divided into cultural courses, technical courses and workshops, and agricultural courses. Culture and agricultural courses were jointly conducted by both male and female students. Technical courses and workshops, on the other hand, were tailored to students' abilities and interests. Technical courses for female students were divided into three groups under the umbrella of village, home, and handicrafts, which included dressmaking and sewing, knitting and weaving, and agricultural arts (Esen, Akandere, 2021, Demirci et. al., 2021).

In this period, there was also a regular modern educational system for girls where they could attend schools with boys. But it should be stressed that middle-class families usually prefer girls' institutes for their daughters (Kılınç, 2013). Thus, it demonstrates that the educational modernization that the Turkish Republic had in mind did not occur suddenly.

It is stated that the Girl Technical Education Committee placed importance on evaluating the constructive services in the education of girls, which were established to enable the country to enter Western civilization and constantly strive for improvement in 1934. The target was elevating the cultural level of women, instilling social behavioral norms in Turkish women, providing skills to become good wives and mothers, teaching the sense of dressing well and the conditions and conveniences of dressing nicely, modernizing Turkish handicrafts, and introducing them to the world while promoting their development (Soydan Erdemir, 2002).



Figure 8. Instructors showing the works of the institute to Sophia Loren & a fashion show for Nazmiye Demirel (prime minister's wife) (Anonymous, 1973).

Maturation institutes, the other example of girls institutes, on the other hand, provide improved educational programs and opportunities for girls (Büyükçınar, 2015). When the programs of these institutes are analyzed a similarity with the girls' institutes is observed. Maturation Institutes offered courses in Turkish handicrafts such as sewing and embroidery. Additionally, they conducted activities such as cooking and nursery care. It is possible to assume that there was still an enduring emphasis on the concept of raising a housewife or a mother or a proficient woman who is capable of aforementioned domestic tasks. In the meantime, Turkish modernization was focused on the concepts of modernity and secularism, that's why there were also fashion design and sewing practices courses which were influenced from modern, western techniques. This was related with the idea of visibility of the modern, fashionable new Turkish woman. So, there were still traces of traditional/conventional methods and modern strategies in education together.

The main goals of maturation institutes, according to the fundamental principles of national education, were to provide women with a profession, to create a "qualified female workforce," to elevate the social status of women in society, and to increase women's contribution to the national economy (Büyükçınar, 2015).

When the programs of Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, Samsun, and Eskişehir institutes are analyzed, it is realized that there were dressmaking and sewing (coats, suits, dresses, fantasy dresses), dress embroidery (fantasy embroidery, bedspreads, covers), colorful embroidery (white work), fashion-flower, laundry, embroidery, painting, metalwork (Maraş work), and Turkish handicraft in 1964. These courses were similar to the other institutes teaching girls. On the other hand, girls being taught such traditional and modern courses together designed and produced prominent works that captured people's and the media's attention. In the media, their drawings and fashion shows were displaying how girls were reinterpreting traditional patterns in a modern way (Figures 8, 9).



Figure 9. Representation of the girls' products in media in 1960s (Kır Şimşek, 2019).

These institutes, which were supported by the government to emphasize a blend of traditional and modern identity, did not pay enough attention to the spatial characteristics of their buildings. It is observed from the visual references taken from the archives that some of the buildings that were being used as maturation institutes were not specifically designed for this function. There was not much difference between the maturation institutes and other institutes in terms of their spatial qualities and interior organizations. This caused criticism from the users of the institutes against the buildings' designs. For example, Yümniye Akbulut, one of the founding members of the Ankara Maturation Institute, criticized the plan organizations of the schools. She said that the projects carried out are generally not designed for the spatial needs of the courses in schools. Some changes had to be made during use in these rationally arranged buildings consisting of classrooms aligned side by side. For example, two adjacent workshops are combined and converted into a new studio that provides a larger usable area (Akbulut, 2010; Kır Şimşek, 2019).



Figure 10. Girls working together in the ateliers of Zonguldak Maturation Institute in 1960s (Personal archive).

Images that are obtained from the personal archives support the archive visuals from the current literature. Here, a similar class design language is monitored (Figure 10). Former graduate, Emel Aslan mentioned that for collective work there were rows of tables -long communal and single ones- that were used like a discussion unit if necessary. Even if they had enough and sufficient materials to use the interior spaces had answered only the user's needs. According to Aslan, their instructors were experts in their fields and they had the chance to be educated equally in all institutions around the country (interview with Emel Aslan). But, Yümniye Akbulut stated that the spatial needs of the users of the interiors were

neglected in the architectural design process. Therefore, spatial revisions were required in Ankara and Izmir cases. They needed to make some interventions to the interior plan organization. For example, the repetition of rectangular ateliers next to each other were started to be used in a multi-functional way (Akbulut, 2010).

It is detected that there is a lack of detailed information on interior organizations and the spatial qualities of maturation institutes in the literature. Therefore, in the context of this study, Refia Övüç Maturation Institute is selected and analyzed. Since this institute is the first maturation institute that still survives, it is possible to trace the transformation process of the building and its interior.

3. REFIA ÖVÜÇ MATURATION INSTITUTE

"... Some of them (graduates) were planning to take the entrance exam for the newly opened Ismet Paşa Girls' Institute in Ankara, aiming to become vocational teachers. But what about the others? They would either become housewives or find employment in their respective fields upon graduation. However, it was necessary for the girls who completed the institute to undergo apprenticeships in workshops related to the profession they chose..." Refia Övüç (Akin, 2011).

The history of Refia Övüç Maturation Institute goes back to Nişantaşı Girls' Institute, which was founded in 1942. Istanbul Beyoğlu Maturation Girls' Technical Education Institute was established in 1945 without any financial support other than the purchase of the institute building in Beyoğlu, which was contributed by the Minister of National Education, Hasan Ali Yücel, and Technical Education Secretary Rüştü Uzel (Arığ, 2007, 2011). This shows that unlike the institutes like Ismet Paşa Institute in Ankara by Ernst Egli, this maturation institute building was not designed and built for this purpose. Instead, they adapted a historical building into a maturation institute. This institute's name was changed to Refia Övüç Girls Technical Vocational Maturation Institute in 1993, and it was renamed again as Istanbul Refia Övüç Maturation Institute in 2012 (Figure 11).

When the literature is reviewed, it is seen that Refia Övüç mentioned that they tried to consider the future of the graduating girls as part of the school administration. According to her, the prospects for girls were quite limited because professions such as sewing, embroidery, laundry, and flower arranging were entirely in the hands of foreigners and non-Muslim tailors in those years. It was important for the institutes to equip girls with these abilities with the help of the institutes. Therefore, the number of maturation institutes will increase soon. These institutes, beyond their education and training perspectives, were the only institutions that actively preserved and passed on cultural values, and endangered Turkish handicrafts, showcasing exemplary instances domestically and internationally. They conducted artistic-focused education and production activities, leading the way for the transfer of knowledge to future generations. The main goals of the institutes were:

- to provide women with professions,
- to create a "Qualified Female Labor Force",
- to elevate the social status of women in society,
- to increase women's contribution to the national economy.

Even if the number of institutes increased rapidly and the importance of the institutes drastically changed, the design elements, the use of technology, materials, etc. could not compete with the other changes. It is understood that spatial characteristics and architecture of the buildings were mostly neglected. The system focused on the education approaches not the architecture and design qualities.



Figure 11. Refia Övüç İnstitute in the past. Refia Övüç with other instructors (Istanbul Beyoğlu Refia Övüç Maturation Institute, 2020).



Figure 12. Girls working in the institute ateliers, in 1949 and 1961 (Refia Övüç Maturation Institute Instagram account).

When the images are analyzed, it is shown that in more than ten years, there was not much spatial change in the ateliers (Figure 12). It is understood that the uniforms of the girls and instructors remained the same; the girls were wearing white collared uniforms while the instructors were wearing black ones. When the archives are analyzed, a simple plan of organization is detected: girls are working together at big, collective working tables. They are exhibiting their works on the plain walls, which were not necessarily designed for that function (http://www.bursadakultur.org/necatibey_kiz.htm). According to the images that are obtained from the archive, it is possible to claim that the interior spaces are tidy and clean. Additionally, they seem like they are relatable with the necessary functions. Since the building was not originally planned and designed as a maturation institute, there was some organizational problems in terms of interior design.

It is important to underline that this institute, originally named the "Istanbul Beyoğlu Maturation Girls' Technical Education Institute," was supported by the government to provide specialization opportunities

for graduates of girls' institutes and evening girls' art schools. There are two prominent examples of collaboration with the government (Figure 13). The first example was a handmade cover gift for the wedding of Queen Elizabeth of England in 1947. The government ordered this cover from the institute as a present. The second example was also a gift that was given for the marriage of the Shah of Iran in 1951. Students of the Refia Övüç Institute worked in painting, sewing, and embroidery workshops to fulfill these orders on behalf of the state. In this context, it might be claimed that maturation institutes and the productions of the institutes were considered representatives of our culture.



Figure 13. Preparation process of a gift & the gifts for Queen Elisabeth and Iran Shah's wedding (Dirlik, 2022).

The institutes' program of 1972 –1973 shows that the institute participated in fundraising campaigns for various associations where the works of the girls are displayed and sold (Dirlik, 2022). The students and instructors of the institute prepared several collections in time. One of these was the 35-piece collection for the occasion of Atatürk's 100th birthday (1981) which was presented through a fashion show (Dirlik, 2022). In addition to this one, one of the other prominent fashion shows and exhibitions dates back to 1999. Here, the 700th anniversary of the establishment of the Ottoman Empire was celebrated (Çorbacı et al., 2014). It is understood that these fashion shows and exhibitions are not only for the representation of the Republic and the abilities of the modern Turkish girls who are the students of the institute.

Since the work of the institute continued over time, a brand; Bohça was created in 2021. The title was chosen because it refers to a traditional Turkish handicraft product. The products of the store reflect a combination of traditional Turkish arts and contemporary strategies. The manifesto of the institute was to emphasize simplification, deepening, qualified originality, traditional innovation, and cultural representation. When the opening ceremony photos of the Bohça store were analyzed, it was understood that the wife of the president of Turkey, Emine Erdoğan, and some ministers were at this ceremony. So, it might be possible to underline that there is still an emphasis on the maturation institutes.



Figure 14. Bohça stores (Anonymous, 2021).

So far, the chronological process of the Refia Övüç Maturation Institute and alternative education institutes for girls has been underlined in this study. Here, it is observed that the spatial qualities of these institutes are also significant and noteworthy. The images from the historical records show that there was a simple interior organization of the ateliers and classes. There was plain furniture used, including tables, chairs, desks, boards, and closets. The common material for the furniture was wood. It might be thought that standard and ready-made furniture used in institutions was preferred. The furniture seen in the visuals shows that iconic, modernist furniture design trends (Ultav, Hasırcı, and Atmaca Çetin, 2021) in Turkey were not seriously employed, but again it is possible to find some quality in the furniture, such as the use of Thonet chairs (no 14, Vienna). This Thonet chair is known as a consumer chair since it is practical in terms of application and manufacture (<https://thonet.com.au/products/no-14-vienna/>). It is possible to trace the modernist design approaches in furniture design and production in Turkey after the 1950s with the help of the DATUMM (Documenting and Archiving Turkish Modern Furniture) archive which documents the modern furniture history of Turkey. Even in the 1930s it was possible to find rare modernist furniture designs of Seyfi Arkan & Fazıl Aysu but in overall modernist furniture design & interior design were not common in this period. As a showcase of it, it might be considered that this kind of modernist quality was not detected in these institutions in the 1930s through the visuals obtained from the archival records of this study. However, although a modernist approach to interior design, furniture design, and use began to become more visible in our country in the 1950s and 1960s, the conditions were slightly different in the context of educational institutions. Such modern approaches were rare in the institutions which are the subject of this study. Here, the emphasis was placed on the functionality of the furniture and the required materials to be used, such as the mannequins and other necessary equipment.



Figure 15. Sewing class & a conference area today (<https://www.instagram.com/beyogluolgunlasma/>)

Archival records & visuals from social media accounts show that there is no major change in the spatial organization & the furniture set. According to the visuals that are obtained from records, it is observed that basic furniture has been used for years until recently. Today, in the furniture set comparatively new construction techniques and materials are noticed. Today, there are minor changes in the furniture in terms of materiality; it is still quite simple and standard.

4. CONCLUSION

The education of girls in Turkey has been an important issue since the early years of the Republic. Since in the Ottoman period, education was for boys, it was the girls who were in the shadows. The importance of the education of the girls was soon realized after the proclamation of the Republic. Specifically, it was underlined with the help of Dewey's report and his suggestions. Over time, many different educational alternatives for girls emerged as well. When these alternatives are analyzed, it is realized that there are several type of institutes all around the country including both big and developing cities. These buildings are usually composed of two to three floors, they follow a rational plan organization. But when a difference such as various classrooms for different courses is required, some of these plans need to be revised to serve these functions and needs.

One of the above-mentioned educational alternatives for girls was the Maturation Institute which had come to the fore due to its improved educational program and several opportunities for girls. Here, it is possible to assume that there is still an enduring emphasis on the concept of raising a housewife, a mother, or a proficient woman who is capable of the aforementioned domestic tasks. Even if Turkish modernization focused on the concepts of modernity and secularism, there are still traces of traditional education methods. While handcrafting in the educational system drew inspiration from the traditions of Turkey, fashion design and sewing practices were influenced by modern, western techniques. This was related to the idea of the visibility of the modern, fashionable new Turkish woman.

Overall, the interior quality in these institutions varies, but there is a gap in the literature regarding these interiors. As the case study of Refia Övüç Maturation Institute, a literature review was conducted; and photographs from the archival records were scanned to trace the old interior organization and atmosphere of the institute. Thus far, the current literature and the photos could be considered as a showcase of the simplicity as the fundamental design element of these interiors. But also it is possible to claim that due to several conditions, specifically economical conditions, the spatial organization of such buildings could not be a concentration point. As a matter of fact, it is observed that educational buildings that are examined in the context of the study share similar plans and interiors except the cases which are originally designed by prominent figures such as Ernst Egli.

This study determined if the notion of simplicity pervades in all educational zones and whether there is a clear separation between different interior spaces based on their respective functions. In this case, like its peers, it is detected that spatial organization was not specifically handled for different functions. Mainly rational and standard spaces were considered, but later these spaces had to be reorganized. Since this building was not designed originally for educational purposes and this historical building has many

limitations such as the window orders, partition walls, users of this institute had to demand for some revisions.

Even if Refia Övüç Institute does not promise an evolutionary design process in terms of its design quality, it still differs from its peers, which were not located in a big city. Refia Övüç Institute, which still survives, is one of the unique representatives of the Maturation Institutes. Today, there are Maturation Institutes in different cities in Turkey for girls, but the significance of these institutes is not underlined sufficiently. Further research, which may emphasize the other institutes in different cities, is proposed because, with the help of these studies, the conditions of the institutes will be better understood.

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