

**Report No. 32450-TU**

**Turkey—Education Sector Study**

**Sustainable Pathways to an Effective, Equitable,  
and Efficient Education System for  
*Preschool through Secondary School Education***

**Executive Summary**

**December 31, 2005**

**Human Development Sector Unit  
Europe and Central Asia Region**

**In Association with  
Education Reform Initiative/ Istanbul Policy Center**



Document of the World Bank

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## ACRONYMS AND CURRENCY EQUIVALENTS

ECD/ECE	Early Childhood Development/Education
EC	European Commission
ERI	Education Reform Initiative
ESS	Education Sector Study
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HICES	Household Income and Consumption Expenditure Survey
HLFS	Household Labor Force Survey
LGS	Secondary School Student Selection and Placement Examination
MONE	Ministry of National Education
MYO	Post-secondary Vocational School
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
NUTS	EU Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics
OSS	University Entrance Examination
OSYM	Student Selection and Placement Center
OBBS	Student Achievement Determination Examination
PEIR	Public Expenditure and Institutional Review
PIO	Primary Schools with Pension Housing
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
PISA	International Student Assessment Program (OECD)
SIS	State Institute of Statistics
SPO	State Planning Organization
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science
YIBO	Regional Boarding Primary School

## LEVELS OF THE TURKISH EDUCATION SYSTEM

Lower Primary Education:	Grades 1-5
Lower Secondary Education:	Grades 6-8
Basic Education:	Grades 1-8 (Compulsory Education)
Secondary Education:	Grades 9-11 or 9-12, including vocational and technical secondary education

## CURRENCY EQUIVALENTS

Exchange rate effective as of June 22, 2005

Currency Unit: New Turkish Lira (YTL)

1.36 YTL = US\$1

YTL 1.65 = 1 Euro

US \$ 1.20 = 1 Euro

## FISCAL YEAR OF THE GOVERNMENT OF TURKEY

January 1 - December 31

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As the EU prepares to consider its application for membership, Turkey is hard at work making the sweeping reforms that earned it the right to enter integration talks. At the heart of EU negotiations is the requirement that Turkey be able to withstand external economic shocks. This requirement implies that the government must make a political and social compact with its citizens commensurate with the goals of the European Union, such that *integration* does not become mass *emigration*. The challenge is clear: if Turkey wants to ensure that its citizens do not become the low-paid service workers of Europe, it must provide a high-quality education to all of its young people.

This Education Sector Study (ESS) is the World Bank's response to the need for a comprehensive study of Turkey's education system, in light of the dramatic changes that are sure to alter the country's social and economic landscape over the next decade. The study was prepared in association with the Education Reform Initiative of the Istanbul Policy Center on the basis of research and dialogue with a wide array of education stakeholders and actors.

Discussions held during the preparation of the ESS produced three, broad policy questions fundamental to a comprehensive sector-wide strategy, which this report attempts to answer:

1. What fundamental educational outcomes (i.e., competencies, knowledge, attitudes, and values) should the education system in Turkey foster in young citizens to help them successfully compete in the global economy, integrate with Europe, and assure sustainable social and economic development at home?
2. What policies can the government introduce to ensure that every student has adequate opportunities to develop these fundamental education outcomes, regardless of individual social, economic or geographic factors?
3. What organizational structures can the government develop or strengthen at central, provincial, and local levels to enable all education institutions in the country to provide these opportunities?

### **A Research- and Dialogue-Driven Methodology**

The overall objective of the ESS is to provide an assessment of current challenges to the education system in Turkey and identify policy options that can complement the country's existing pre-tertiary education strategy. This Executive Summary provides a summary of the report, highlighting the key challenges for reform and briefly summarizing potential policy options. Volume I provides a complete description of challenges, conclusions, and policy options for the reform of pre-school, primary, and secondary education. It includes an Annex that summarizes the research studies and

policy notes commissioned to inform the report. Volume II is a collection of the complete research studies and policy notes commissioned for the ESS report.

The ESS adopted a two-pronged approach of research and dialogue. To guarantee that the study would be well grounded in contemporary research, the ESS team commissioned more than a dozen studies of key components of the Turkish education sector, including an assessment of current sector-wide indicators, a cost-benefit analysis of pre-school education, the equity implications of the current structure of education financing, the school-to-work transition, as well as a qualitative assessment of rural schools. A separate policy study on higher education is under development by the ESS team and will be submitted to Government shortly.

Dialogue with key education sector actors (think tanks, NGOs, and officials of the Ministry of National Education, the Ministry of Finance, and the Treasury rounded out the report and guided the development of policy options relevant for the Turkish context. The ESS facilitated twenty-five meetings and workshops for government, academic, and civil society organizations to promote discussion and encourage policymakers and stakeholders to formulate a comprehensive education sector strategy. These discussions provided forums for participants to exchange ideas, identify system shortcomings, and suggest topics for additional research.

The challenges outlined below are constraining Turkey from fulfilling the dream of an educated, equitable society in which all youth—regardless of gender, socio-economic background, or place of residence—have the opportunity to achieve their potential. By addressing these problems in a comprehensive education strategy, Turkey will ensure that all young citizens have an equal opportunity to enroll in quality schools and engage in challenging and relevant learning experiences.

### **Building on the 1997 Reform**

*The basic education reforms introduced by the 1997 law need to be enhanced by additional, qualitative reforms.*

With the approval of the eight-year compulsory Basic Education Law in 1997, the government of Turkey implemented an expansion of the basic education system as quickly as possible to capitalize on political momentum for growth. In the six years following the law's enactment, Turkey increased the supply of primary education classrooms by 30 percent, making room for an additional one million students.

The overall objectives of the original eight-year Basic Education Program were to: (a) expand opportunities for all children to attend grades 1 through 8, (b) increase the quality of education so as to encourage regular attendance, and (c) encourage children to complete the eighth grade. An education paradigm that dates back to the previous government has, however, limited Turkey's ability to achieve its more recent and broader-based education reforms, such as modernizing the national curriculum,

supporting the new curriculum with teacher training and professional development, and introducing school quality standards. The old paradigm, which defined education sector policy in Turkey for over two decades, was built on two major principles: (1) to increase education outcomes, it is sufficient to deliver more inputs, and (2) to raise educational quality, the government must exercise additional authority and control.

Both of these principles were necessary to achieve rapid increases in enrollment and to establish adequate learning conditions for all students. In order to meet the education challenges of European integration and EU accession, however, a paradigm shift is needed to focus the education system on creating high-quality education opportunities and outcomes for all students. It is clear that Turkey's education community is already shifting to this new paradigm, which recognizes the central importance of processes, incentives, and organizational factors for producing quality teaching, engaging learning experiences, a rich and modern curriculum, and school partnerships with parents and the community.

*Today, improvements in learning achievement, equity, entrance to secondary school, and the school-to-work transition are urgently needed to reinforce the significant gains of the 1997 reform.* Recent international assessments<sup>1</sup> have ranked Turkey well behind most of its counterparts in student learning achievement. Compared to the education systems of European countries, Turkey's system performs less well overall and admits substantially fewer students to secondary school. The result is an adult population with an appreciably smaller proportion of secondary-school graduates than the rest of Europe, particularly women graduates.

The government has already moved to address present imbalances in the education system. One significant step was taken in 2003, when the Board of Education embarked on an ambitious program to modernize the basic education curriculum, a process that it has pursued with a high degree of consultation and discussion with the teachers, faculties of education, and civil society. The Board of Education is also undertaking the modernization of the secondary education curriculum. Nonetheless, to be fully successful, the new curriculum must become part of a comprehensive strategy that focuses on creating better educational opportunities, learning experiences, and outcomes for all children and youth.

Initiatives that can support this goal include linking the ongoing educational reforms to the secondary-school placement exam; assuring a more integrated system for teacher training and support; and introducing governance and accountability mechanisms at the national and provincial levels to support curriculum reform. These mechanisms will motivate schools and communities to ensure that all students succeed in learning and give the Ministry of National Education the tools to monitor the performance of each and every basic education school in the country.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, Trends in International Mathematics and Science (TIMSS), Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) and, more recently, the International Student Assessment Program (PISA).

## The Equity Gap: Girls and the Poor

*A system that provides high quality education only to a narrow few is too costly to sustain and does not support Turkey's integration into the global economy. All children and youth must be provided with high quality learning opportunities.*

Despite the rapid expansion in primary school enrollment over the last decade, and significant improvements in the access of the poor and of girls to school, gender and poverty gaps in education continue to have an impact on Turkey's education indicators. Thousands of children, especially girls and children of extremely poor households, are still not enrolled in basic education.<sup>2</sup> With regard to non-compulsory schooling, less than 14 percent of children aged 4 to 6 were enrolled in pre-school in 2003, a much lower rate than in other middle-income countries. Furthermore, despite significant government efforts, access to secondary school continues to be limited by the availability of school places, especially in rural areas, as well as by family choices. In addition, gender differences in educational achievement remain high: one in three high school-aged girls does not attend school, compared to only about 1 in 10 boys. This is the largest gender gap among EU members and candidates. The situation in the Southeast, where in 2003 only 14 percent of girls attend secondary school, is even more frustrating to policymakers in Turkey.<sup>3</sup>

Low secondary school enrollment rates for girls and the poor not only impair the future for these young people, but will affect the future of the entire nation. Unequipped with the competencies needed for successful employment and career growth, they will have low job productivity, contribute less to Turkey's economic development and growth, and even provide a diminished tax base. Furthermore, lower educational attainment for girls will directly translate into continued under-representation of women in the labor market, with even greater negative consequences for economic development, growth, and tax revenue. *The long-term societal cost of a system that does not make every effort to assure the provision of secondary education to all of the country's young people should not be underestimated.*

One problem is that Turkey has not been fully successful in achieving consistent distribution of educational resources across its schools and regions. A great number of children living in villages across the East, Southeast and in marginalized urban areas throughout the country are enrolled in schools that do not provide the minimum conditions needed for students to reach the next level of schooling. Sizable differences exist in both physical and human resources across primary schools, as recorded in the

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<sup>2</sup> Aggregate education statistics indicate that 10 percent of Turkish children in the compulsory age group (6 to 14) are not currently enrolled in school. Nearly three-fourths of these children are female; more than half are children of illiterate mothers.

<sup>3</sup> Turkey recognizes these problems, and has undertaken the implementation of various projects that have sought to improve equity, including the 1997 Basic Education Program and the "Support to Basic Education" projects financed in part by the World Bank and the European Union, the "100% Support to Education Program" which provides tax incentives for the private sector to invest in education, the Unicef supported "child-friendly schools," and "' Come On Girls, Let's Go to School," projects, and the private sector supported "YIBO Support" project.



ESS research papers. For example, teachers in the poor East and Southeast regions have, on average, one-half to one-third the teaching experience of their counterparts in other areas. Differences in primary school quality have, moreover, direct implications for students' access to secondary school and, ultimately, tertiary education.

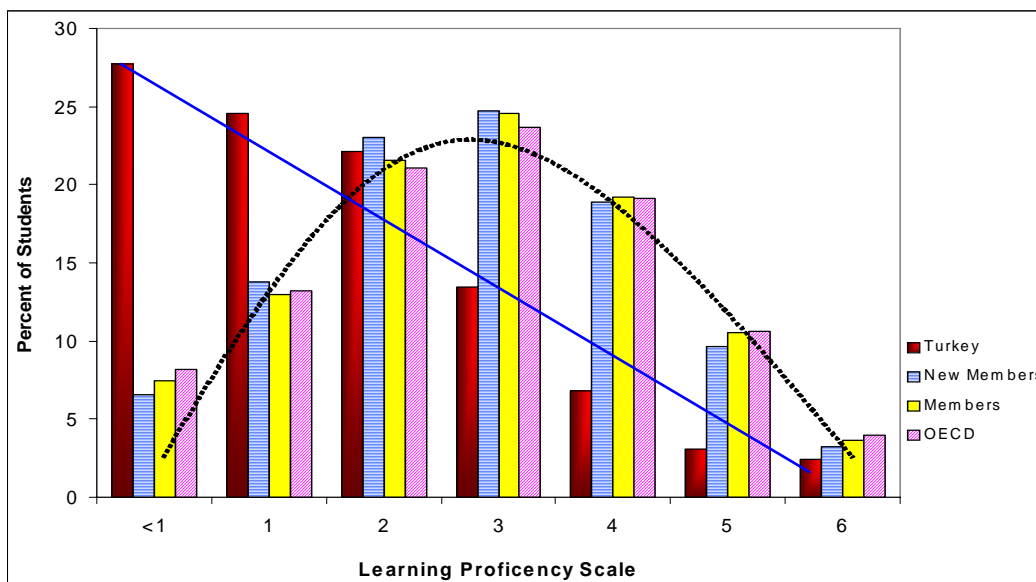
At the secondary level, differences in school quality are not only the norm, they are a source of pride for some: the elite Anatolian and Science High Schools are highly prized components of the Turkish education system. Access to these exemplary secondary schools is strictly controlled by an entrance examination administered at the end of eighth grade, in which only about 1 in 10 students succeed. Students who either do not take or pass the exam go on to general secondary or vocational secondary schools, or drop out of schooling all together.

At present, the examination system tends to exacerbate the inequality of access to quality education beyond the primary level. Families with economic means send their children to private tutoring courses to improve their chances of passing both the high school and university entrance exams. Most families and students, who do not have such financial means, have less of an opportunity to access a high-quality education.

### Uneven Educational Achievements

*Turkey's challenge is to transform a school system that succeeds in educating a small number of students at the highest international standards into one that also educates all students well.*

**Student Performance on OECD's 6-Point Learning Proficiency Scale  
(Program of International Student Assessment --2004)**



Results of international and national assessments, as confirmed by ESS research, show that most Turkish students fail to develop basic language, math, science, and problem-solving skills during their first eight years of schooling. According to the PISA results of 2003, Turkey's 15-year-olds performed, on average, below their counterparts in every OECD country that participated in the PISA evaluation. Whereas only 21 percent of students from OECD countries performed at or below the lowest achievement level, more than half of Turkey's students fell into this category. Yet it is clear from the above figure that Turkey knows how to produce elite quality education: the share of Turkish students that performed at the highest level on the PISA mathematics exam was 2.4 percent, compared to 2.2 percent for students in the United States.

While it might be expected that general secondary schools would be slightly out-of-touch with labor market needs as they see their objective as preparing students for university entrance, ESS research indicates that vocational secondary schools in Turkey are not doing much better in preparing students for the world of work.<sup>4</sup> The research shows that, for young people who do not continue to tertiary education, vocational graduates are not significantly more likely than graduates of general secondary schools to be employed after graduation. In addition average hourly wages are about the same for both groups. (See figure below)

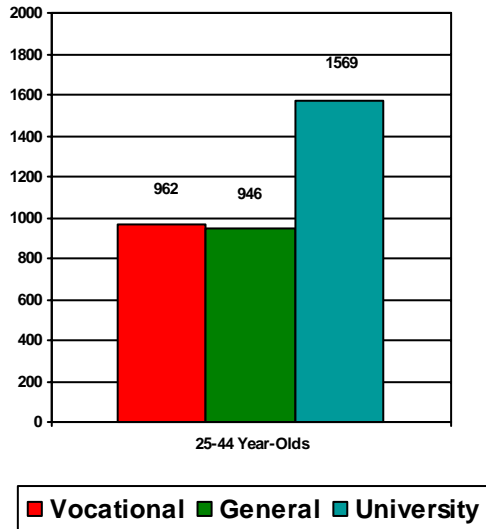
When it comes to pursuing tertiary education studies, vocational graduates have several disadvantages relative to general secondary education students. First, because of their concentrated vocational training, they tend to be less prepared for the academically-oriented university entrance exam. Second, the university entrance formula, which gives greater weight to students' performance when they are applying to study in a related field, reduces the likelihood that vocational graduates could enter into a four-year university program because, by definition, none is directly related to a vocational field. And third, while vocational graduates are provided with direct access to tertiary education (without consideration of their score on the university entrance exam), their choice of discipline is limited to the specific field they studied in their secondary vocational school.

Despite these constraints, the Government's goal during the last 25 years has been to have a substantially higher proportion of students pursuing the vocational track. Indeed, the government established the ideal target for vocational enrollments as a 65 percent share of total secondary enrollments, in contrast to the fairly constant 35 percent of students who have elected to attend vocational schools over the last decade.

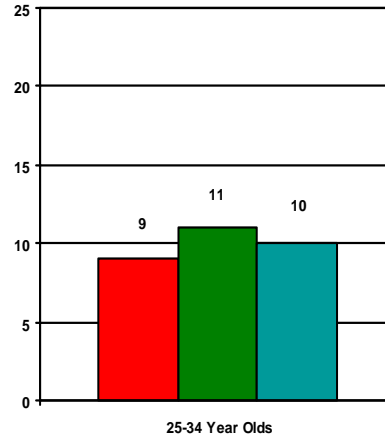
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<sup>4</sup> The Ministry of National Education, with the support of the European Union and the World Bank, is implementing several programs designed to increase the quality and relevance of vocational education in Turkey.

**Hourly Earnings by type of Diploma in TL (2002)**



**Adult Unemployment Rate by type of Diploma (2003)**



As noted earlier, the examination system is a source of tremendous inequality in the education system. The typical price of a university exam cram course exceeds US\$4,700. This exam has high stakes and grave consequences for the majority who do not succeed: only one-third of applicants pass it each year. Yet, in the opinion of university educators, the test is not a good indicator of the skills needed to pursue a university education. Turkey’s selection examinations are, moreover, not substantially linked to the secondary school curriculum, test only a limited range of curriculum content, and do not provide a feedback mechanism for schools and teachers to evaluate student progress. *The university entrance exam system, as currently designed, is not aligned with the goals of developing a creative and competitive workforce, nor a broadly educated citizenry.*

### Selecting, Educating, and Supporting Teachers

*Efforts should be directed towards the development of an integrated strategy for teacher education and professional development that reflects teacher needs, student interests, and the social goal of creating an informed citizenry.*

The most critical area for education policy improvement in Turkey is teacher quality. Research from around the globe demonstrates that teacher quality and practice are the most important determinants of student learning, apart from family background and community factors.

The process of teacher preparation, selection and assignment in Turkey is under the authority of at least three different agencies. Prospective teachers are selected, often from specialized teacher-focused high schools, by universities via an entrance exam

conducted by OSYM. The curriculum for these programs, determined by the faculties of education at the higher education institutions and the autonomous Higher Education Council (YOK), is largely theoretical and has little connection to the policies, curriculum or objectives of the Ministry of National Education (MONE).

In fact, very few teacher preparation programs develop the kinds of skills teachers need to engage students and transform them into learners. After graduation, aspiring teachers sit for a civil service exam to gain admission to the profession and determine their school assignment. MONE has neither authority nor significant influence over these gateways into the profession. Moreover, there is little structured dialogue between the Higher Education Council, OSYM and MONE.

Inadequacies in the selection and pre-service development of teachers increases the importance of MONE's responsibility for providing excellent in-service professional development and career plans designed to attract and retain the best teachers. Unfortunately, MONE has historically been unsuccessful at these tasks. Professional teacher development tends to be organized by the In-Service Training Department of MONE and delivered in the form of large seminars or convocations managed centrally or provincially. Such training sessions are held only occasionally, mainly during the summer months. Training typically incurs substantial expenses on the part of school staff, who must travel to regional centers for the sessions.

*Research shows that traditional seminars and workshops are relatively ineffective because they do not provide opportunity for practice, follow-up, and reflection.* Teachers consistently malign these programs as boring, unrelated to their needs, and poorly implemented. (The irony of instructors who use rigid didactic instruction, known as “chalk and talk,” to describe active teaching methods, at a time when active teaching and engaged students are the focus points of MONE's curriculum reform, is the should not be overlooked.)

Teacher career planning is a second area where the government could benefit from new policy strategies. Currently, teachers are assigned to their choice of city (they are allowed to pick only one) based on their civil service test score; if they don't like their assignment, they may swap with another teacher. Teachers are then distributed to the schools in need of teachers (prior to 2005, teachers were placed only at the province level; their assignment to local schools was left to the discretion of local officials). Teachers must spend two to four years in their first assigned school before entering another “lottery” round. Finally, teachers are paid the same amount regardless of their level or specialization, with annual salary increases of roughly 5 percent for the first fifteen years—a pay structure that provides few incentives for self-improvement. (A recent change to the Civil Service Law, which will introduce a career ladder with differential levels of pay and responsibility to three categories of teachers, will be made effective once the regulations are enacted.)

## **The Equitable Allocation of Resources**

*The current education system is neither structured to respond to the needs of individual schools nor to support teachers' efforts to improve the learning of all children in their classrooms.* Unfortunately, disadvantaged groups with the least possibility of having a voice in resource distribution are presently the groups most neglected by the education system.

Legitimate, historical reasons—including the aims of nation building, social unity and cultural cohesion—are largely responsible for Turkey's highly centralized education system. According to OECD data, 94 percent of all education decisions in Turkey are currently made at the central level. In such a centralized policy environment, one would expect all schools in Turkey to look similar, at least in the characteristics over which MONE has control. Yet substantial disparities exist among regions, provinces, sub-provinces, and individual schools. Turkey's system certainly has the capacity to ensure equitable distribution of school inputs and human resources across its large territory. Existing disparities appear to result from a lack of clear technical criteria for determining resource distribution. Solving this problem is well within the capacity of Government and school practitioners.

Turkey also has a less-than-effective infrastructure for providing support and technical assistance to individual schools. The most common interlocutor between a school and MONE is the School Inspectorate, which tends to give less attention to education-related issues (e.g., curriculum, instruction, the teaching/learning process, school climate) and more to administrative issues. By and large, recommendations related to school improvement or classroom pedagogy are not conveyed by inspectorates to schools in any formal, documented form.<sup>5</sup>

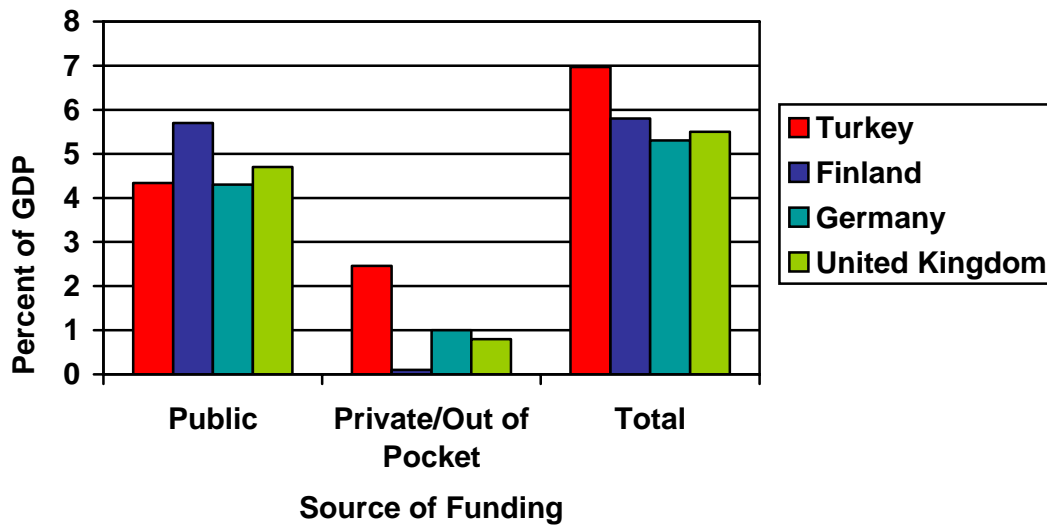
## **Improving the Return on Educational Investments**

*Financing policies need to be aligned with the key objectives of the education system.* Turkey's pattern of education expenditures differs substantially from those of other countries. Total education spending (public plus private) as a proportion of GDP was approximately 7 percent in 2002, or about US\$13 billion, making the country an outlier among European and OECD countries. Among OECD members, who spend an average of 5.2 percent of GDP, only Denmark and the United States spent more on education than Turkey in 2002.

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<sup>5</sup> There may begin to be some improvement in this area since MONE has begun the implementation of an online web-based teacher development and support system. Furthermore, MONE plans to increase school and staff performance further through such programs as "total quality management" and the "school development model" (which is a form of school-based strategic planning).

## Funding Education as a Percent of GDP



*Compared to the countries of Europe and the OECD, however, Turkey allocates a smaller share of government spending to education: 4.3 percent in 2002. In other words, Turkey’s total spending on education is high due to exceptionally high private expenditures, which represent 36 percent all recurrent spending.*

*A significant equity gap persists in secondary school spending. In 1994, the poorest 40 percent of the population captured only 25 percent of the resources spent on secondary education. This percentage had barely changed by 2001, when it reached 28 percent (Mete 2004). Assuring universal secondary school coverage would all but eliminate the largest part of this secondary education spending gap. ESS research finds that financial resources do not appear to be allocated with the aim of reducing inter-regional, inter-provincial, or urban-rural educational disparities. For example, average expenditure per student was approximately YTL 1,250 (US\$925) in 2004, but in some provinces, principally in the southeastern and eastern regions of the country, per-student expenditure was only about half that amount.*

These findings raise several very important questions. Given the relatively huge share of GDP devoted to education, is Turkey getting the results it desires from this investment? How does the government use education financing to fulfill the social mission of improving equity of opportunity and education outcomes? Given that such a large share of education spending comes from private sources, is Turkey satisfied with the way in which the government leverages private financing to obtain desired education outcomes? *Research suggests that Turkey is not getting the results it seeks from the combined public and private spending on education.*

## **An Emerging Education Sector Strategy**

In recent years, the Ministry of National Education has developed a variety of programs, projects, and initiatives designed to improve the education results of its graduates and contribute to their intellectual development, employability, and productivity. In order to integrate these programs, projects, and initiatives into a coherent whole, a larger, guiding strategy is needed. Such a strategy would ensure that policymakers do not work at cross purposes and prevent ad-hoc implementation. A coherent national strategy for the education system would also focus the objectives of all existing government programs and initiatives on well-defined outcomes and targets. Finally, a broadly understood and shared strategy would help Turkey allocate resources and evaluate their effectiveness more efficiently.

An analysis of existing programs, projects, and initiatives conducted by the ESS team makes it clear that Government already seems to be working within the framework of an emerging *education sector strategy*. The overall goal of this emerging strategy appears to be: to ensure that all children and youth have the opportunity to attend a school that offers a challenging, high quality educational experience and helps them develop the educational competencies and qualifications commensurate with their interests, abilities, and efforts.

The Government's emerging strategy may be said to encompass *five strategic objectives*, which are:

- Universalize the provision of 8-year compulsory education, and systematically expand the provision of secondary education, so that all children and youth can develop a solid, high quality educational foundation.
- Provide targeted support to children of disadvantaged families and girls to ensure their enrollment in, and completion of a quality education program.
- Continue to modernize the curriculum and upgrade teaching and learning to provide children and youth with challenging and engaging learning experiences that enable them to develop the competencies and skills to find skilled employment, pursue postsecondary education, benefit from lifelong learning, and help Turkey compete in Europe and the global economy.
- Provide teachers, principals, counselors, other school staff, and well as central and local education officials and managers with the appropriate preparation, incentives, tools, and support to improve their commitment and effectiveness as guides to Turkey's future citizens.
- Establish effective and modern governance arrangements and incentive structures to assure that all human and financial resources in the sector, both at the central and local level, are used efficiently to achieve the objectives of Turkey's education sector strategy.

## **World Bank Recommendations**

As summarized above pages, the ESS reviewed the performance of Turkey's education system in depth and identified a number of critical challenges. In addition, the ESS team examined the Ministry of National Education's education policies, programs and projects, and in doing so, highlighted a set of policies that the team considers as the Government's emerging *education sector strategy*." The World Bank encourages the Ministry of National Education to continue consolidating and deepening this emerging strategy by incorporating, as appropriate, lessons learned from the analysis of policy options presented in the main report of the Education Sector Study and other ongoing analytic work. In addition to deepening the existing strategy and seeking to extend public understanding and ownership of the strategy, the Ministry could develop it further by: (i) including specific targets and schedules, (ii) delineating financial requirements to implement it over a specific time period, including through the development of a medium-term expenditure framework; (iii) assigning clear responsibilities to managers and staff, and authorizing them to take the related decisions on policy and implementation; (iv) delegating greater decision making authority and accountability to local actors and practitioners, as appropriate; and (v) instituting a process of adaptive, collective learning and feedback during implementation.

To further assist the Government in meeting these challenges and further developing its emerging *education sector strategy*, the ESS recommends that Turkey undertake a program of reforms based on the policy options presented in the main report.

In this context, the ESS makes the following recommendations:

### **1. Increase Student Educational Qualifications, Especially Secondary Education, to Converge with the EU.**

To do this, Turkey should move quickly to dramatically increase pre-school enrollment, especially for the poor, to help assure that all children successfully complete the 8-year basic education program. This will surely require an increased use of targeted programs and incentives designed to get the out-of-school population into and through the basic education system. Parallel to this, Turkey will have to launch a major strategic initiative, along the lines of the successful 1997 Basic Education Reform, to achieve at least 80% net secondary school enrollment by 2015. One step to help achieve this is to raise the student/teacher ratio in all secondary schools to within the 20-30 students-per-teacher range, which will contribute to an increased enrollment capacity. In addition, Turkey will need to follow through on its plans to make secondary education universal and compulsory, step by step in a fiscally, institutionally, and physically manageable way.

### **2. Systematically Raise the Quality of All Schools.**

To assure that increased enrollments result in increased learning outcomes, Turkey needs to do more than provide inputs, such as classrooms, teachers, books, and curriculum guides. It needs to put in place an indicator system to establish, monitor, and support



improved educational quality and outcomes in all of its schools. Several of the basic elements of an indicator system that sets targets for the quality of education in every school, measures quality in all of the schools against these targets, and provides mechanisms to help schools meet the targets, is already under preparation in the Ministry of National Education. But these central elements need to be developed fully, integrated with the other components of Turkey's education strategy as recommended in the ESS, and developed in consultation with the Ministry's institutional and social partners, other stakeholders and beneficiaries, and made broadly known and understood. Once in place, MONE will need to put in place a strategy to raise every school up to the target that involves not only central government authorities but also local authorities, the school staff and parents, the local community, and other partners.

### **3. Align the Curriculum, Examinations, and Teaching on Student Learning**

The only viable way to assure that the Government can simultaneously increase access, raise quality, and improve educational outcomes, given resource and time constraints, is to make sure that the principal components and incentives of the education system are aligned with the core objective of student learning. First this means that the examinations need to be designed so as to measure the competencies, behaviors, and know-how that the new curriculum is seeking to develop. Today, Turkey's high stakes tests have one main purpose--to create a ranking of students so that selection into private schools, elite secondary schools, and universities can be readily conducted. Given its pivotal role in Turkey's entire educational system, the **university entrance examination (OSS)** in particular should be redesigned into a cluster of modern assessments aligned with the objectives of the revised curriculum, that comprehensively assess what students know, what they are able to do, how they reason, and how they apply their learning in various contexts. In order to support and reinforce what teachers are trying to accomplish in their classrooms, these assessments would need to employ more sophisticated diagnostic measures than multiple-choice items. At the same time, a redesign of the university entrance examination system would have to be done in such a way as to guarantee that the integrity and transparency of the current OSS is fully maintained. Finally, to emphasize the new mission of the OSS, MONE should make passing it a requirement for all students seeking a secondary school diploma, and not just for university-bound hopefuls. Once these changes are made, then efforts by students, parents, and teachers for good test performance will be the same efforts needed to make sure that students are developing competencies consistent with the new curriculum and needed to be successful in the world. Everyone will be on the same page, and "teaching to the test" will mean teaching to develop the competencies that all students would need.

Likewise, teacher preparation and support need to be aligned with the new curriculum and examination systems. To assure that this can be done, the Ministry of National Education and the education faculties, along with the Higher Education Council, will need to agree on the definition of the professional skills, knowledge, qualifications, and values that should characterize good teachers, and work jointly to develop quality assurance, accreditation, and program assessment mechanisms to guarantee that the universities are preparing teachers with these characteristics, and that inservice training

programs are helping practicing teachers adapt to these expectations. Furthermore, they will have to cooperate with the OSYM to make sure that the civil service examination supports the recruitment of teachers with these characteristics.

#### **4. Provide Opportunities for all Secondary Students to Prepare both for Tertiary Education and Skilled Employment.**

Turkey needs to stop worrying about how to end the high social demand for tertiary education and tackle the more important problem of how to assure that all secondary school students have the opportunity, support, and motivation to work hard in school, keep up high expectations for their future, and develop the full range of competencies (academic, analytic, and applied) that they will need both for further education and high-skilled employment. MONE should make sure that students enrolled in vocational programs will have access to courses that enable them to develop the core competencies and skills that all graduates will need to be successful in an increasingly competitive labor market. Likewise, students enrolled in general secondary schools should have the opportunity and motivation to learn the applied and technical competencies needed for future employment since that the vast majority of them will never enter a four-year university program. Over time, MONE will need to reduce the separate tracking of vocational and general secondary students, while offering applied and technical skills, and apprenticeships, to all students. This also means that no student should be cut off from preparing for, and competing for entrance to tertiary education. Furthermore, it means that a substantial increase in the number of tertiary education institutions is needed and high quality alternatives to four-year universities need to be created. In fact, increasing access to tertiary education (and not only 4-year university programs) should become a major objective of the Government. A related but very important reform is that students should not be required to choose their life-long career in 9th or 10th grades, but should have greater flexibility to select or change subject matter in secondary school and in post secondary institutions in response to their changing interest and differentially evolving talents, as well as changes in the labor market.

#### **5. Give School Autonomy and Funding, and Hold them Accountable for Results**

Given the sheer quantity and widespread geographic distribution of schools across Turkey, it is obvious that officials in the Ministry of National Education in Ankara alone would not be able guarantee that each and every school could provide challenging, high quality educational experiences and deliver good results for all of its students. Schools need to be given responsibility for their performance and outcomes. International research suggests that education systems with central management of the curriculum framework but school-based control over schedules, material resources, and personnel utilization perform well. The research also shows that students in schools with greater autonomy learn better than in schools with less decision-making space. The evidence in Turkey suggests that Government cannot count on circulars, mandates, punishment, or other mechanisms of central authority to address all of the myriad and individual factors that constrain school quality. Moreover, excessive use of such authority may interfere

with efforts to engage the creativity and enthusiasm of the teachers and staff at the schools themselves in the quality improvement efforts. Turkey has had a positive experience with its “School Development Model,” which shows that schools with the proper degree of external support have the capacity and incentive to do their own strategic planning and develop viable improvement projects. The model would need to be updated to align it with the new school quality indicators, improved curriculum standards, and revised examinations recommended above so as to achieve improved student learning outcomes. Moreover, schools would also need to receive and manage funds for self-managed school improvement projects, and be held accountable for achieving the quality targets by the use of such grants.

## **6. Use Public and Private Funding Strategically to Increase Access, Reduce Disparity, and Raise Quality**

The Government's stated goals of expanding access, improving equity, raising quality, and increasing the number of years of compulsory schooling, and the objectives of the emerging strategy that is described above, can only be attained if the actions needed to achieve the reforms are carefully costed-out at the margin, budgeted, and made fiscally viable. In particular, the Ministry of National Education will have to make sure that there is an explicit correspondence that connects the costs, strategic objectives, and implementation targets of the reforms with the Government's financing capacity. The first step in this process would be for MONE to prepare a detailed multi-year expenditure framework that links its implementation targets with annual budgets, and given the inevitable fiscal constraints, will also need to scale back on activities and programs that are not directly tied to achieving the targets. Once the expenditure framework is in place, MONE will also need to make it, along with the implementation targets public, and be held accountable for spending and outcomes. One of the most important benefits of this process is that it would automatically provide detailed information on financing gaps that external agents such as the private sector and the European Union would be able to fund.

## **Final Words**

*The steps recommended in the Education Sector Study may help ensure that the government can successfully call upon stakeholders and other partners to contribute, both technically and financially, and in a more efficient way, to achieving the goals of an education system that will serve Turkey in its pursuit of European integration and global competitiveness.*