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*Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2008*  
*Education for All by 2015: will we make it?*

## **Turkey country case study**

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### ***List of Abbreviations***

AÇEV	Mother and Child Education Foundation
BoE	Board of Education
CCT	Conditional Cash Transfer
CGCT	Contemporary Girls of Contemporary Turkey
CSI	Civil Society Index
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
ÇYDD	Association for Supporting Contemporary Life
DPT	State Planning Organization
ERI	Education Reform Initiative
EFA	Education for All
KA.DER	Association for Supporting and Training Women Candidates
GER	Gross Enrollment Rate
GPI	Gender Parity Index
EU	European Union
MoNE	Ministry of National Education
NER	Net Enrollment Rate
ÖSS	Student Selection Test
PSU	Parent-School Unions
SRMP	Social Risk Mitigation Project
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
YİBO	Boarding Primary Education School
YÖK	Higher Education Council

## Executive Summary

Equity and quality issues in education sector threaten Turkey's social and economic development. Urgent education reform is critical to benefit from the window of opportunity presented by favorable demographic conditions, which is expected to fade out after 2020.

Accordingly, many reform initiatives have been launched by governments since the Dakar Conference in 2000. While a National Plan of Action was presented two years later, the research showed no evidence that this plan forms a benchmark for evaluating and monitoring progress. Alternatively, the only overarching public policy document accessible to non-governmental actors is the Development Plan prepared by the State Planning Organization. The recent plan covering the period between 2007-2013, is more comprehensive of Education for All Goals, emphasizing equity as much as quality.

Education policies also reflected this changing attitude for the last couple of years. A major campaign for girls' education was launched by the Ministry of National Education in collaboration with UNICEF in 2003. The campaign has been also complimented by various initiatives of non-governmental actors to increase girls' access to primary education and other social policies and projects of the government, such as providing conditional cash transfers to the poorest six percent of the population. Meanwhile, Turkey's most ambitious and comprehensive curriculum reform was launched in 2003.

Certainly, governments undertook many other policy initiatives to improve the status of education in Turkey. The report covers some of these policy efforts on a selective basis. Nevertheless, their impact and effectiveness is yet to be evaluated. The deficit of quality, analytical and empirical research evaluating these efforts constitutes a major weakness. So does the level of attention on monitoring and evaluation from policymakers.

The introduction of strategic planning and performance based budgeting could promote more emphasis on evaluation and monitoring in the coming years. A transparent, overarching education policy could foster policy dialogue among stakeholders.

There are additional factors supporting education reform and policy in Turkey. Civil society, private sector and international organizations provided financial and technical support.

Overall, the report draws attention to several policy implications. These are as follows:

- **Political and economic support for education reform:** The next government of Turkey, whether as a single party or a coalition government, should sustain and further increase political will for education reform.
- **The need for adopting strategy-oriented sector policy:** It is very critical that the newly introduced strategic planning process within the Ministry of National Education functions in an effective and timely manner.
- **Evaluation and accountability of education policy-making:** The current capacity within the Ministry of National Education could be improved to better serve this need. Also, there is definitely room for further progress in collaboration with universities.
- **A new national impetus to increase quality:** The next wave of reform should aim at increasing human, physical and financial capacity of each school. Turkey can no longer tolerate schools that neither have some degree of organizational and financial autonomy nor have competent administrators and teachers.

## Introduction

Current demographic trends in Turkey, namely a younger population, especially vis-à-vis European Union (EU) countries, increasing life expectancies and decreasing fertility rates, constitute a window of opportunity for progress. Turkey aims to benefit from this window of opportunity to transform into a knowledge society with a highly competitive economy capable of sustainable development and eventually become a member of the European Union. Education is of strategic importance in pursuit of these challenging goals, urging constant progress in access, equity and quality. As such, education reform has become a principal issue for the country (Aydagül, 2004).

It is worth underlining that Turkey is a country of economic and social paradoxes. On the one hand, Turkey is a member of the world's elite clubs. The Republic, founded in 1923, has been a member of OECD since 1961 and associated with the European Economic Community since 1963. Its economy is among the 20 largest economies in the world according to 2004 World Development Indicators figures. (Aydagül, 2006a).

On the other hand, Turkey is ranked 94th in the World Development Index 2005, based on 2003 figures. That is almost half-way through countries ranked under Medium Human Development, where there is no other OECD and EU country, except Romania. Given the indicators, its economic performance is way better than its overall human development. This development gap has been caused by two major factors. The first one was the high population growth during the last quarter of the 20th Century: The population doubled to 70 million between 1970 and 2003. Turkey's economic development was not strong enough to accommodate this population growth. The second factor has been a lack of political commitment to and the corresponding failure of social policies in health and education development, especially considering the population growth (Aydagül, 2006a).

This paradox can be traced in education as well. Some of Turkey's challenges are particular to low-income countries. Take disparities in education for example. The Education for All: Global Monitoring Report 2006 highlights two issues regarding gender inequality in education: Firstly, male-biased gender inequality is found in low-income countries with undeveloped education systems (exceptions are Equatorial Guinea and Turkey); secondly, Turkey, among 24 other countries, risks failing to implement gender equality in primary and secondary education by 2015.

There are also challenges that are more similar to ones EU and OECD countries face. Among some of these topics are life-long learning, vocational and technical education, tertiary education, teacher policies, information and communication technologies in education and the quality and effectiveness of education.

Governments and the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) have tackled both set of challenges through various policies, programs and projects. Their efforts were supported and complemented by Turkish civil society and private sector. International organizations, mainly European Commission, the World Bank and UNICEF have provided valuable financial and technical support.

This report looks at the policies and programs that have been implemented after the World Education Forum in Dakar in 2000 and aims at providing a critical and constructive assessment as best it can. It is based on a desk review of substantial and quality documentation consisting of policy documents, sector studies, assessments, research and reports. First-hand involvement of the author in education policy and his interaction with stakeholders since 2003 through his role in the Education Reform Initiative have proved valuable in analysis.

While Education for All (EFA) Goals cover secondary and life-long learning in addition to basic education, the report focuses to a great extent on basic compulsory education. This focus is

driven by the fact that Turkey is still far from assuring that every child completes a quality primary school.

MoNE plans and undertakes various initiatives to improve the status of education in the country. There are 29 legislative activities (new legislations or revisions), 82 projects and 83 protocols listed in the Budget Report for Fiscal Year 2007 (MEB, 2006c). Therefore, providing information about each of these initiatives in the report becomes very difficult. The principal selection criterion was relevance of the initiative to a critical challenge in education.

## Background

Turkish education system comprises of two major avenues as formal and non-formal education according to the National Education Foundation Law (#1739) dated 1973.

Formal education consists of preschool, primary, secondary and higher education. Preschool education is on voluntary basis and covers children at ages 3 to 5. Primary education, compulsory for all boys and girls, is for eight years and it covers the age group 6-14.<sup>1</sup> At this level, there are no different school types and all students follow the general education programme.

There are three alternatives available after eight-year compulsory education: General secondary education, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and non-formal education. In 2006, all secondary schools were extended to four years from three. Afterwards, students can continue to tertiary education, which consists of two-year vocational colleges and/or four-year universities, pending a very competitive university entrance exam. Within the formal system, TVET is offered at secondary level by technical and vocational high schools administered by the Ministry of National Education and, at tertiary level, by vocational colleges controlled by the Higher Education Board (YÖK). TVET is also delivered through apprenticeship training and non-formal education again administered by MoNE.

It is expected that all students acquire relevant basic skills during their eight-year compulsory education. Hence, acquisition of vocational and technical skills starts with secondary education. Vocational training schools are expected to facilitate the entry of their graduates to labour force by delivering pre-employment skill training responsive to the needs of markets.

Following the introduction of eight-year compulsory basic education, gross secondary enrolment rates rose from 50% to 85 % (MEB, 2006a), further fuelling demand for tertiary education. While the number of university applicants was 892,975 in 1990, this number increased to 1,730,876 in 2005 (YÖK, 2005). As demand exceeds supply of places at tertiary education, more secondary graduates end up ‘unplaced.’ In 2005, among applicants to Student Selection Test (ÖSS) 11% were placed in four-year universities at undergraduate level, 4% in two-year vocational colleges and 13% in distance education programmes. Furthermore, 118,138 technical and vocational high school graduates were placed in vocational colleges without testing. About 1,250,000 graduates (67% of all applicants) could not be placed in any programme. 57% of this group were those who have taken the test at least a second time.

### *Overview of latest developments*

Turkish education system has gone through two major waves of reform during the last decade. The first wave aimed at expanding access to education. It was triggered by the renewed worldwide attention on basic education and the global campaign “Education For All” in the 1990’s. It came to a peak in 1997 with the expansion of compulsory education from five to eight years (Aydagül, 2002).

The second wave, currently underway, aims at improving the content of and increasing quality in education while completing the job initiated by the first wave. Current reforms have been mostly driven by the international discourse on human rights in education (i.e. United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004) and the project by the Council of Europe on Education for Democratic Citizenship).

In the coming chapters, these developments will be further elaborated from three different perspectives, namely policy environment, equity and quality.

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<sup>1</sup> The Law No. 4306 enacted in 1997 extended primary education from 5 to 8 years.

## The policy environment

### *Governance*

Reform in public administration and finance has long been a need for Turkey. While there has been some progress since 2000 especially as regards a more disciplined public finance system, administration reform is still pending. Legislative activities in this field gained momentum after this government came to power with a clear majority in 2003. When this government completes its term by November 2007, it will be the longest serving one since transition to multi-party democracy in Turkey.

### **Attempts to reform public administration in Turkey**

#### *Ambitious objectives to tackle the need for reform*

A major policy priority for the current Government was to reform public administration in Turkey. In October 2003, the Prime Minister's Office published the book on "Restructuring of Public Management I: *Change of Management for Change Management*" (as an overarching strategy document for series of legislations, most critical one being "The Law on Fundamental Principles and Restructuring of Public Administration.")

The book was building on previous public efforts and plans to increase effectiveness and transparency of public administration. The need for reform in public administration has been acknowledged by many for some time and succinctly outlined in the Eight Development Plan (2001-2005):

The need for a holistic, radical and lasting change including human resources, administrative principles and functioning in the public administration continues. Accordingly, elimination of existing deficiencies and breakdowns in the objectives of public institutions, their duties, distribution of the duties, structure of the organization, personnel system, resources and the way they are used, present public relations system are the priority issues. (p.225)

In addition, previous governments had already undertaken major institutional and legal reforms as regards the administration and monitoring of public finances, social security and insurance and banking sectors in collaboration with international monetary institutions. This change was primarily driven by the objective of restoring Turkey's reputation in international financial markets after the economic crisis of 2001.

The strategy document was outlining four deficiencies in public administration: Strategic Deficiency; Budget Deficiency; Performance Deficiency and Trust Deficiency. Accordingly, it was argued that these four deficiencies provided a comprehensive framework for problems underpinning reform efforts in administration. Public administration lacked a strategic perspective and long term planning and it was getting even bigger and more centralized. As such, it was driving expenditures over revenues, therefore causing budget deficits, and underachieving citizens' expectancies, therefore creating a performance deficit. As this unproductive administration process interacted with corruption, it was undermining citizens' trust to state (Dinçer & Yılmaz, 2003)

In 2003, the public administration reform was planned to tackle these deficiencies by introducing changes in central administration and municipalities and adopting complementary legislations on set of issues, such as transparency and freedom of information, alleviation and simplification of bureaucracy. The fundamental principles of reform were introduced in the draft law on Fundamental Principles and Restructuring of Public Administration. Accordingly, the new understanding and implementation of administration would:

- Respect the markets and use market tools as possible
- Provides civil society organizations a wider space under the protection of rule of law
- Prioritizes local governance
- Focuses on priority issues through a strategic management approach and is based on performance and quality
- Uses information technologies on all administration processes
- Favors short and simple legislations
- Requires flat organizations and delegation
- Builds trust to increase participation
- Increases accountability
- Believes in freedom of information
- Aims at developing and improving human resources

### *Challenging legislative process*

The Law on Fundamental Principles and Restructuring of Public Administration was enacted by the Turkish Grand National Assembly on July 2004 and vetoed by the President of the Republic two weeks later. One of the principle concerns of the President was decentralization. The President argued that the law was limiting the authority of the central government, decreasing its institutional and functional capacity, making decentralization and privatization of all public services possible. As such, it was contradicting the “single state” model, which only enabled a central state and peripheral organization under its supervision and inspection, as embedded in the Constitution. This law still awaits in the parliament and no further action is expected until after general elections. Meanwhile, the government passed laws on Municipalities, Greater Municipalities, Special Provincial Administrations, Unions of District Administration and Public Fiscal Administration and Control. Some of these laws had been subject to Constitutional Court hearings and as a consequence some articles were annulled by the Court.

Throughout the last few years, it became evident that further public sector reform is not likely to survive unless constitution is amended to allow a more decentralized administration and finance structure within the state.

On the other hand, the Law on Public Fiscal Administration and Control, enacted in December 2003, introduced contemporary concepts to public fiscal administration. Its objective was to assure efficient and effective collection and use of public funds in accordance with development plans and programs. Three core principles were identified for use of public funds: Fiscal transparency, accountability and strategic planning and performance based budgeting. The law required public administrations to prepare a strategic plan that would include their mission, vision and measurable strategic objectives, which they were expected to use to monitor and evaluate their performance.

Strategic planning in public administration is a new phenomenon for Turkey and is coordinated by the State Planning Organization (DPT), which published a decree as regards the process shortly after the law. Administrations were required to prepare their first strategic plans following a gradual transition process, which ends by January 31, 2009.

### **Impact on education governance**

The draft law on Fundamental Principles and Restructuring of Public Administration assigned provision of all services concerning national education to the central government, maintaining the current status-quo. MoNE was allowed to deconcentrate some authority to provincial directorates for service provision purposes. As such, decentralization in education has not been part of the restructuring plan.

The only novelty came with the Law on Municipalities, which enabled municipalities to build and/or restore public school buildings and provide all kind of material needs. This aims at increasing funds invested in education infrastructure by incorporating local governments. However, there is no evidence showing an increase. It is argued that citizens' pressure on their elected officials could drive an increased ownership of education needs at local level, followed by more spending.

A second novelty could have been the authority assigned to municipalities for establishing preschools institutions. However, the related article of the law was recently found in violation of the Constitution and annulled by the Constitutional Court.

The impact of the Law on Public Fiscal Administration and Control has been more visible within MoNE, just like in other administrations. The unit that was formerly known as "Research, Planning and Coordination" was transformed into "Strategic Development." This unit is responsible for strategic planning, budget and performance, accounting and internal auditing.

In 2006, preparations for a strategic plan were launched. A guidebook is published and two training workshops were conducted with central and provincial officials. MoNE is expected to complete its strategic plan for the period 2010-2014 by January 2009.

Meanwhile, operational changes brought in by the new law on fiscal administration have been introduced within MoNE as well. Strategic Development Unit has published reviews for 2006 and 2007 budgets, making comprehensive information about policies, programs and projects of the ministry accessible to general public, thereby increasing information flow to stakeholders and enhancing transparency of MoNE.

### **Restructuring efforts within the Ministry of National Education**

Turkey has one of the most centralized education systems in the Europe and Central Asia region and among OECD and EU countries. (Gershberg, 2005) Moreover, education system is a colossal bureaucratic engine consisting of 36 different central units and 81 provincial directorates, carrying responsibility for running and/or controlling 45,812 pre, primary and secondary schools, which accommodate almost 15 million students and 600 thousand teachers. (MEB, 2006a)

The need to restructure central administration of the ministry has been acknowledged for some time. It was argued that the current organization was not functional and that the excess of units and personnel was driving it to be more static and bulky. Main argument of reform proposals was redistribution of functions between central and provincial units. Accordingly, central administration would be responsible of curriculum, planning and inspection and provincial units would undertake service provision. Emphasis was given to quality of human resources for increasing the capacity of the ministry. The Law on Organization and Duties of Ministry of National Education had to be modified in order to realize these changes in 2002.

There have been seven amendments to the Law on Organization and Duties of Ministry of National Education since 2000, none of which addressing above-mentioned issues. However, by 2003 the ministry sought advice from TÜSSİDE, a governmental institute providing management consultancy and change management services, for restructuring its organization. After a long and participatory process, a reform plan was completed by late 2004. The plan proposed a substantial downsizing of central units. For example, three general directorates on vocational education (Girls Technical, Boys Technical, Commerce and Tourism) would be merged under one overarching general directorate and directorate of preschool education would be closed and embedded within the directorate of primary education.

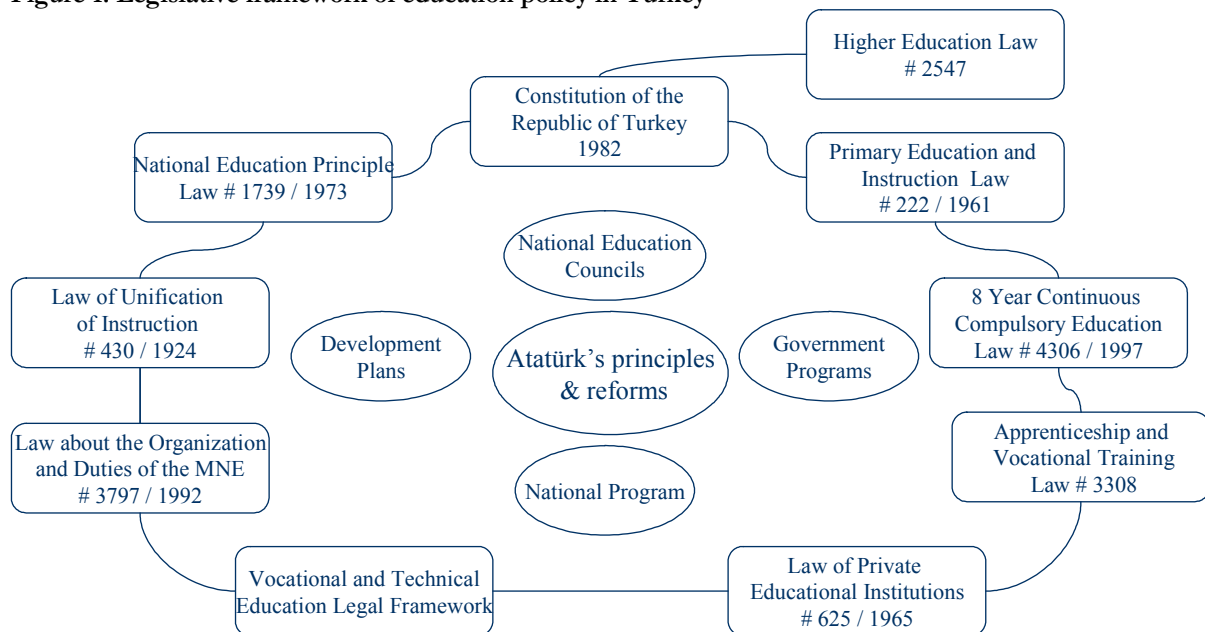
So far, this plan has not been put in action. It is likely that the slow pace of overall public administration reform hindered the implementation process. Moreover, no progress can be expected until 2008, when a new government should be formed. Nevertheless, increasing quality

and effectiveness of institutional and functional capacity of MoNE continues to be a critical policy priority for Turkey. As identified in Turkey Education Sector Study (World Bank, 2005), “the current system is not structured to respond to the needs of individual schools, nor does it support teachers to improve the learning of all children in their classrooms.” This underlines the fact that governance of education sector remains as a challenge for Turkey.

### ***Inclusion, Monitoring and Evaluation of EFA Goals***

It is necessary to look at the legislative framework of education policy in Turkey to assess policy objectives and trace the inclusion of EFA goals (Figure I). At the core lie the principles and reforms of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Republic of Turkey. These provide an overarching ideological foundation to all legislations and policy documents. Then there are the constitution and major laws as regards education, providing a legal framework for planning and administration of education. Among these, the Law on Unification of Instruction placed all educational institutions under the control of the MoNE in 1924 and has been very instrumental in central administration of education since then. Finally, there are documents that shape overall education policy, such as government programs and development plans, for given periods.

**Figure 1: Legislative framework of education policy in Turkey**



So far, development plans prepared by the DPT constituted a bureaucratic accommodation for policy assessments and objectives in many sectors, including education. There is not an education specific sector plan prepared by MoNE, however, as mentioned-above a strategic plan will be developed until 2009 for the period 2010-2014. Meanwhile, MoNE has begun publishing the ‘Budget Reports’ prepared for the parliamentary debates on education sector budget every year during December (MEB 2005; MEB 2006c). These reports provide comprehensive information about the education system, objectives and strategies and MoNE’s operations and projects. These include more descriptive information rather than empirical and quantitative assessments.

The Development Plan mechanism constitutes the primary tool for monitoring and evaluating the education sector. The seven-year-long plan is implemented through annual programs, which assess the progress towards macro objectives and outline policy priorities and interventional for the coming year(s). However, DPT documents lack an in-depth assessment of previous policies and interventions.

The 9<sup>th</sup> Development Plan is more inclusive of EFA goals vis-à-vis the former plan. In addition to on early childhood education, universal coverage and education quality, the new plan

prioritizes girls and students in rural areas and addresses dropouts as an important policy objective. This illustrates the fact that the 9<sup>th</sup> plan is more responsive to critical issues in education that have not received adequate bureaucratic attention previously.

### **Key priorities to achieve education targets in the 9th National Development Plan 2007-13 (DPT, 2006; Wort, 2007)**

- An expansion of pre-primary and early childhood education and a greater focus on equity and inclusion in the system;
- Addressing school dropout rates in primary schools to ensure those in danger of dropping out can be motivated to stay in learning especially in rural areas and targeted at girls;
- Improving transition rates to secondary education and a system allowing for improved transfer in the system;
- Development of improved teacher competencies in pre-service and in-service teacher training in-line with the new curricula and active learning methods;
- Enhancing non-formal learning approaches including e-learning;
- A change from exam-oriented learning to one of multiple-assessments based on the new curricula aligned with access to higher education;
- Improving all education institutions through the introduction of performance-based management models.
- Increasing the role of the private sector in all education levels.

### ***Policy support by international agencies***

The involvement of national and international actors in education reform has been encouraging and has complemented various change efforts launched by MoNE. The World Bank, EU and UNICEF have been already collaborating with Turkish governments as major international actors, providing significant financial and technical capacity. The World Bank is about to close the Basic Education Project II (\$300,000,000 - in loans) and launched the Secondary Education Project (\$100,000,000.- in loans). EU has been emphasizing basic education in the €100,000,000 worth of grant package allocated to Turkey in addition to two smaller projects to modernize and strengthen TVET. UNICEF and MoNE recognize gender disparities in education as a major problem and have led an advocacy campaign supporting girls' schooling.

Meanwhile, there have been various initiatives to support education policy in Turkey. The World Bank published its Education Sector Study (World Bank, 2005), OECD completed its Review of National Policies for Education (OECD, 2005), European Commission addressed critical issues in Accession Reports and enabled development of several white papers through its projects in Turkey (Worth, 2007), and UNICEF commissioned researches especially as regards gender parity in education (Hoşgör, 2004; Büyüköztürk, 2005). Most of these adapted a sector approach, used empirical research to feed policymaking, thereby expanding the knowledge base, and benefited from external assessments. The implementation of the Education and Training 2010 Work Programme under the Lisbon Agenda also promoted monitoring and evaluation through its progress reports (EC, 2005).

The involvement of international agencies has been critical in supporting the emergence of a new policy culture in Turkey. A gradual shift to discussing policies on a more rational basis, using research findings has begun. This is critical for a country with a heavily centralized bureaucracy and especially in the absence of formal procedures that promote participatory, transparent and factual policy-making.

### ***Engagement of non-governmental actors***

Overall, the civil society and NGO movement in Turkey has re-emerged throughout the 1990's after surviving a decade of pressure initiated by the military coup of 1980 and the new constitution of 1982, which limited freedoms of individuals and associations to a great extent (Aydagül, 2005). However, there is still room for progress as the Civil Society Index (CSI) Project points out "civil society in Turkey is of limited strength, yet undergoing a significant era of transformation" (Bikmen & Meydanoglu, 2006, p. 13).

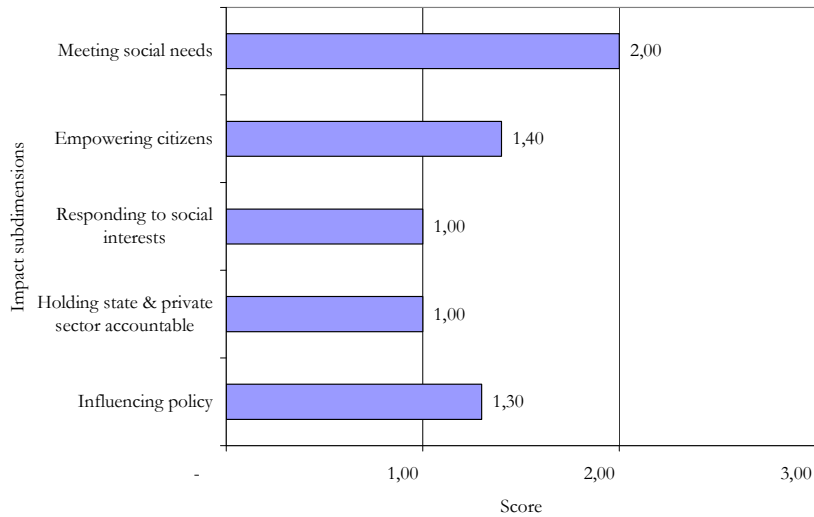
Civil society has increased its capacity to provide services and showed an unprecedented collaboration after the devastating Marmara earthquake in the face of inadequacy of government to coop with the disaster. On the other hand, civil society became a more visible and active player in political arena, moving from a traditional opposition role to constructive engagement as regards the government, especially after the UN Habitat II Summit in Istanbul increased its legitimacy and visibility (Aydagül, 2005; Bikmen & Meydanoglu, 2006).

Recent studies showed that "foundations by and large continue to stick with service delivery, and operational support, whereas associations are increasingly taking a more active role in shaping policy and addressing the underlying causes of social, economic, political and civic injustice" (Bikmen, 2006, p. 22). An overall assessment of the impact created by civil society organizations (CSO) is provided in Figure 1. In terms of *holding state accountable*, the CSI study found limited CSO activity and no discernible impact (Bikmen & Meydanoglu, 2006). However, a more optimistic impact assessment was available on influencing policy, especially as regards human rights, i.e. freedom of thought and expression.

In terms of education sector, there has been a visible increase as regards the engagement of civil societies in the policy-making process. Major teachers' unions, which differentiate on ideological backgrounds, have mostly secured their critical position as regards the government. More often these unions use activism as a tool for influencing education policy vis-à-vis advocacy because they are either driven by self-interests or basing their arguments on ideologies rather than research and evidence. Nevertheless, their presence and activities are critical for monitoring government, especially in the absence of effective CSO impact on holding state accountable.

A new addition to education policy sphere has been Education Reform Initiative (ERI) project which was launched within the Istanbul Policy Center at Sabanci University in 2003 to improve education policy and decision making through research, advocacy and monitoring (ERG, 2005). Supported by various national and international funders, ERI attempted to serve as an example as to how policy dialogue should be conducted within a contemporary democratic framework by bringing together civil society groups and the relevant state agencies to catalyze an innovative collective thought process for education reform policy. As such, ERI engaged in monitoring and advocacy activities as regards access to education with emphasis on gender disparities, a more democratic curriculum promoting critical thinking skills, a non-confessional curriculum for compulsory Religious Culture and Moral Education course and quality issues in education.

**Figure 2: Subdimension score in impact dimension of civil society (Bikmen & Meydanoglu, 2006)**



There is also an increase among advocacy activities and campaigns of NGOs. More often these campaigns focused on girls' education, more information about these will be provided in the following chapters. There was, however, another successful campaign promoting expansion of early childhood education in Turkey. The "7 is too late campaign" was led by the Mother and Child Education Foundation (AÇEV), a prominent NGO working in early childhood education and female literacy fields. The campaign, which was supported by six other major NGOs, aimed at raising public awareness regarding the vital importance of 0 to 6 early childhood education, and ensuring that preschool education services are provided to a larger number of children.

**Box 1: Activities of the "7 is too late" campaign (AÇEV, 2007)**

- Via the media, ensuring the public focuses on the issue and keeping problems related to early childhood education on the public agenda.
- Creating knowledge through symposia and new research studies.
- Organizing meetings and panels so that the platform formed together with power partners reaches a higher level of participation.
- Raising public awareness through activities such as children's festivals, sporting events, concerts, and photography competitions.
- Meeting with decision makers and opinion leaders at specific intervals to work on radical suggestions to be made for changing education policy.

## **Policies and strategies to promote equity**

2007 marks the tenth anniversary of the Law 4306, which extended compulsory basic education from five to eight years, initiating a comprehensive Basic Education Reform in Turkey. The law introduced structural changes in the school system by integrating lower secondary (grades 6-8) with primary schools (grades 1-5). As a result, the cumulative net enrollment rate (NER) for the first eight years of schooling dropped significantly because net enrollments at the lower secondary level around that time was as low as 53%.

Between 1997 and 2002, Turkey enrolled 1.1 million students to grades 1-8 through a rapid coverage program, through which 104,000 classrooms were built and 70,000 new primary school teachers were recruited (Dülger, 2004). An estimated 3 billion \$ were spent annually by the government as well as by private donors. Ten years after, gender parity index<sup>2</sup> (GPI) at the eight-year compulsory primary finally surpassed the 1996/97 level after surviving an initial radical drop. However, Turkey fell short of achieving EFA Goals in 2005.

A review of the last ten years draws attention to the strong impact of the Basic Education Reform until 2000/01. By then, while NER for boys and girls had caught up with 1996 levels, GPI still lagged behind a few percentage points as boys enrollments increased more rapidly. In fact, NER for both girls and boys were higher than current levels. Since then, there have been drops in enrollments with boys' rates declining more rapidly. To some extent, the economic crisis of 2001 can be held accountable for this deterioration. The impact of poverty on children and education has been documented by recent research and studies.

During these 10 years, Turkey survived natural disasters, social unrest and economic crises. It is critical to highlight these before analyzing statistics in greater detail and looking at what impedes children's access to schooling in Turkey.

### **Internal migration**

Migration has long been a Turkish reality since peasants began migrating to big cities in pursuit of jobs during the second half of 20<sup>th</sup> Century. However, a new wave of migration different in nature emerged during the 1990's as a thousand villages in the East and South East Turkey were evacuated as part of the government campaign against rising terror. According to official figures, 358,335 people left their villages in 14 provinces in the East and South East Anatolia by the beginning of 2006 and moved to cities around Turkey (Kurban et. al., 2006). In most cases both fathers and mothers lacked employable skills in urban labor force, often mothers spoke none or very little Turkish and there were many children around. As policymakers failed to accommodate the needs of these people, families found themselves displaced, unwelcome and living under very disadvantaged conditions.

### **Marmara earthquake**

The first one was the devastating Marmara Earthquake on August 1999, killing tens of thousands of people and causing economic losses in billions of dollars.

### **Economic disaster**

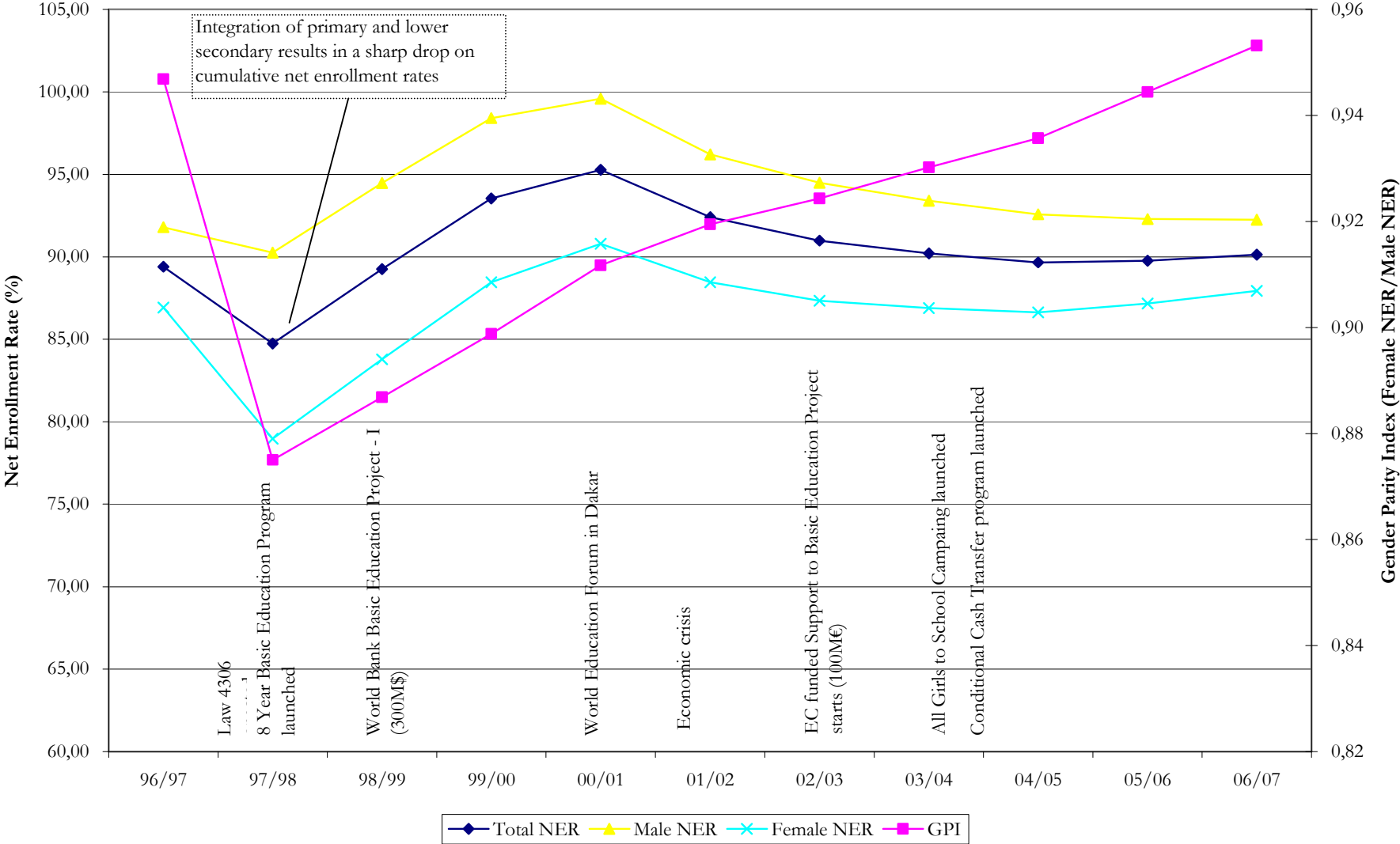
Just as the country was trying hard to recover from this tragedy, one of the worst economic crises of the 83 years-old Republic hit in 2001 when a domestic political conflict caused the collapse of IMF program and related economic policies. That year, Turkish Lira devaluated more than 100 percent (TCMB, 2007), GNP got 9.5 percent smaller (DPT, 2007) and unemployment rate rose almost two percentage points to 8.4 from 6.5 (TÜİK, 2007). The following year unemployment

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<sup>2</sup> GPI= Girls' NER/Boys' NER

reached above the 10 percent watershed and has been floating around these levels since then (TÜİK, 2007).

Figure 3: Trends in NER following the expansion of compulsory education to eight years



## **Barriers**

An important “social equity” problem exists with respect to equal access to education. There are severe disparities between genders, regions and social economic classes, which tend to increase from the northwest of Turkey towards the southeast (Aydagül, 2006; Smiths & Hoşgör, 2006; Wort, 2007). Girls and women in Southeast Turkey constitute the most disadvantaged group. Overall, one out of five adult women in Turkey is illiterate. One out of ten girls do not attend compulsory primary school, three out of ten do not attend secondary school. These gender disparities make Turkey, together with Equatorial Guinea, exceptional cases, as all other countries where gender disparities favor boys are low-income countries (UNESCO, 2006).

Disparities also exist among regions and social classes (World Bank, 2005). Tens of thousands of children from poor households are not enrolled in basic education; access to secondary and pre-school education is even more unequal. Enrolment rates in the northeast, the east and the southeast Turkey lag behind other regions. Nine out of ten provinces with the lowest spending on education per student are located in east and southeast Anatolia. The tenth city, Istanbul, has been the primary magnet of migration for decades. Disparities in achievement also exist. According to PISA (OECD’s Program for International Student Assessment) results, the variation of performance among schools in Turkey is highest among OECD countries. Socio-economic levels of schools and students explain two-thirds of this variation.

### **Economic barriers**

Economic barriers are twofold. The first concerns direct expenses related to schooling. The other is related to alternative cost of children’s schooling in economically disadvantaged families.

According to a national education expenditure survey conducted in 2002, Turkey spends approximately 7 percent of its GDP on education, of which 64 percent is financed by public and 36 percent by private sources (World Bank, 2005). In terms of private spending, Turkey is second in a row after South Korea among OECD countries. Out of this private spending, 31 percent is directed towards public universities, 27.5 percent towards public primary schools and 13.3 percent towards public general high schools. At the primary level, where a compulsory and free education is guaranteed by the constitution, private out-of-pocket spending is around 1.36 billion USD. This translates to an average of 39,000 USD of annual private contribution<sup>3</sup> per public primary school. This contribution includes spending for children’s uniforms, transportation to school and their stationery, etc. and families’ direct contribution to schools to support a variety of needs, such as maintenance, renovations, extra-curricular activities.

**Table 1: Household spending on education, top four items (World Bank, 2005)**

	%
Public Universities	30,64
Public Primary Schools	27,48
Public General High Schools	13,30
Private Course Houses (University)	11,72

Private contributions to public schools have long been a reality in Turkey. In order to better regulate this phenomenon, the government shut down all associations established to look after schools and located the authority to collect and spend external funds to *parent-school unions (PSU)* through a new MoNE legislation in 2005. PSUs are authorized to collect funds through receiving cash or in-kind donations, managing the canteen and schools’ premises and organizing social, cultural, sportive courses, projects and campaigns. The legislations prohibit PSUs to force

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<sup>3</sup> According to survey data, this figure includes total household spending at public primary schools + in-kind received by children attending this level.

parents to make donations. However, there are various anecdotal evidences indicating infringements of this principle.

It is evident that public spending of 1,214 USD per student at the primary level (Yılmaz, 2007) is not adequate for delivering a quality education in a safe and hygienic learning environment. Thereby, schools are obliged to ask for households' contribution to cover expenses such as maintenance and renovation of schools, purchasing of supplementary teaching and learning materials, organization of extracurricular activities, and etc. These and other direct costs, such as uniform costs or fees for school buses, of schooling drives an unequal distribution of education quality among regions, social classes and genders, hindering many children's access to and completion of basic education (Hoşgör, 2004; Kurmuş, et.al., 2006).

On the other hand, poverty still constitutes a major barrier before schooling as children work to support their families' economic survival. In the East and South East Anatolia region, families prioritize their short-term urgent needs versus long-term and not so definite benefits of education for their children (Kurmuş, et.al., 2006). In Istanbul, depending on their sons' and daughters' income has become a poverty fighting strategy for families (Hoşgör, 2004). This is also relevant for families who labour in seasonal agriculture (Wort, 2007). According to a research conducted in six provinces, 29 percent of children dropped out of schools because they had to either work or become an agricultural labourer (Gökçen, et.al, 2006). Also effective economic determinants of dropouts are living in rental apartments, lack of social security for the family and unemployed father (Gökçen, et.al, 2006).

Moreover, poverty drives families to make choices among their children as to who will continue schooling. As a result, most of the time girls are faced with discrimination and they are obliged help their mother by doing house work or looking after their younger siblings (Hoşgör, 2004).

### **Social, cultural and family background related barriers**

Smits and Hoşgör (2006) showed that “children from families with higher socio-economic status, for children with lower birth order, with fewer siblings, with Turkish speaking and less traditional mothers and living in the more developed and urbanized parts of the country” were more likely to participate in education (p.557). Similarly, Gökçen, et.al (2006) found that among family related determinants of dropouts, mother's literacy, family's interest in children's education, language spoken at home (if Turkish is spoken at home, children are more likely to stay in school) and expectancies from education are the four most effective ones. Language comes across as a critical barrier in both researches as well as in Civil Monitoring Groups' Monitoring Reports (2005 ) especially for girls' participation in education.

### **Supply-side barriers**

Barriers before children's access and completion of education are not limited to demand-side issues. As mentioned-above, private sources do contribute to a great extent to public primary schools and wherever this is not possible due to lack social-economic capacity of the neighborhood, students are doomed to get a low quality education in not-so-favorable learning environments. For example, an assessment of social policies in the East and South East Anatolia points to an important lack of public investment in education in the region (Keyder & Üstündağ, 2006).

As a matter of fact, this can explain symptoms such as, shortage of schools and classrooms, rather distant proximity of schools to villages, poor sanitary facilities and lack of extracurricular activities. Furthermore, this issue is not confined to a particular region as education quality in Istanbul, the biggest metropolitan in the country, suffers from lack of investments required to face the coming migration to the city (Hoşgör, 2004). Three provinces with highest

student/classroom ratio at primary level are Şanlıurfa (62) and Gaziantep and İstanbul (51). Şanlıurfa and Gaziantep are located in the South East Anatolia region.

As regards dropout at compulsory primary level, the most critical determinants related to schools and teachers are sense of belonging to school, effective communication with teacher, physical capacity of school, extracurricular activities and safety (Gökşen, et.al, 2006).

## ***Effective policies and strategies***

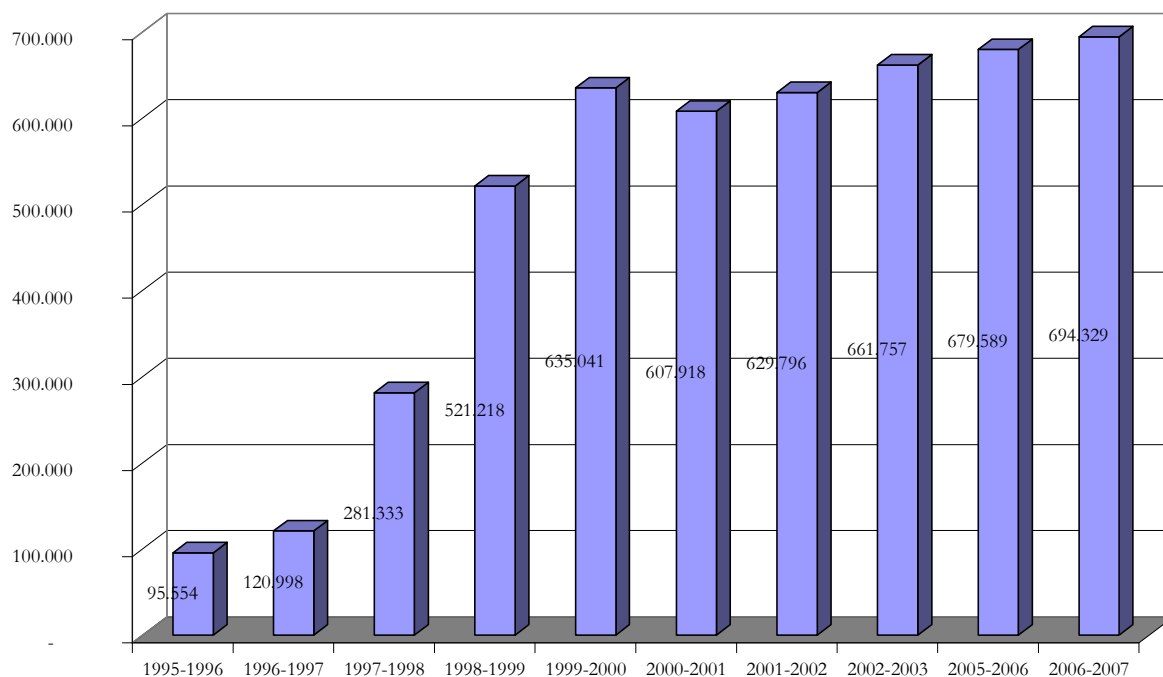
### **Policies and strategies to improve supply**

#### Bussing students

Bussing students has been a particularly critical strategy especially in rural areas where villages are dispersed through a vast area, such as in East and South East Anatolia. It was first piloted in four provinces in 1989/1990 and subsequently expanded to nine provinces. Today, all 81 provinces are covered. In 2006-2007, 694,329 students were transported daily to 6,410 central schools from 27,818 villages in Turkey (MEB, 2006c). Girls constituted 47 percent of these students.

As numbers indicate in Figure 4, there was a substantial increase in the capacity following the launch of basic education program. This increase brought legislative improvements in the administration of the system in 2000 and 2004.

**Figure 4: Numbers of students bussed**



#### Boarding schools

Students are bussed as long as the proximity of villages to schools is between 2-30 km. If the distances are more than 30 km, children are boarded at regional free boarding primary education schools (YIBO), which are designed to board only their own students (Dülger, 2004). In 2005-2006, 166,794 students attended 603 YIBO (MEB, 2006c). The government covers all needs of these children. 56 percent of all YIBOs are located in the East and South East Anatolia (Keyder & Üstündağ, 2006).

The government increased the number of YIBOs significantly after 1997 (Dülger, 2004). Although these schools still serve important needs, there are serious quality deficiencies,

including poor physical infrastructures (Keyder & Üstündağ, 2006). The very unfortunate collapse of a YİBO in Bingöl following an earthquake resulted in death of 84 students and a teacher. Triggered by this tragic event, there has been since increased public and private support to improve quality of these schools.

#### Continuing investments in physical capacity

The government built 126,906 primary classrooms between 2000 and 2005. Construction of 13,796 classrooms was financed by private sources as part of the “100 percent Support to Education” campaign, which granted a full tax return to individuals and companies for their contribution to education (MEB, 2006a). The number of total classroom built between 2003 and 2006 is 100,272, of which 20,549 were built by private sources (MEB, 2006c).

#### Distribution of free textbooks

The government began distributing free textbooks in 2003. So far, 373 million textbooks were distributed to all students in primary and secondary schools for a total cost of 422 million USD (MEB, 2006c). This policy is appreciated for easing direct costs of schooling.

### **Policies and strategies to facilitate demand**

#### *Haydi Kızlar Okula!* (Let’s go to school, girls!) -- the girls’ education campaign in Turkey

MoNE and UNICEF led a massive inter-sectoral campaign to mobilize various organization, agencies and individuals in a drive to increase enrolment rates for girls and achieve gender parity in education by 2005 (UNICEF, 2007). The campaign focused on the first ten provinces during 2003, adding another 23 provinces in 2004 and a further twenty provinces in 2005. Despite some progress, the ambitious goal of achieving gender parity in 2005 was not realized. Thus, the campaign continued and was expanded to cover the entire country with the addition of the last twenty-eight provinces in 2006.

#### **Box 2: Inter-sectoral collaboration in *Haydi Kızlar Okula!* (UNICEF, 2007)**

Vitally important inter-sectoral collaboration was evidenced by the formation of a Central Steering Committee consisting of Deputy Undersecretaries of MoNE, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Health (MOH), the Social Services and Child Protection Agency (SHÇEK), the Ministry of Religious Affairs and UNICEF.

The United Nations Country Team agreed that girl’s education would be the UN Gender Theme Group’s (UNGEI) priority in Turkey.

Advocacy and promotional materials such as training manuals, a visual presentation for trainers, posters, brochures, pins, FAQ booklets and videos were developed.

Print and electronic media were enlisted in support of *Haydi Kızlar Okula!* at both national and local levels, providing invaluable access to the public in order to raise awareness.

Television broadcast spots with celebrities and well-known public figures were produced.

The Minister of Education, the Head of Religious Affairs and the Prime Minister himself took part in these short films -- a demonstration of commitment to the campaign objectives at the highest level.

A quantitative evaluation was conducted in 2005 to assess the progress in 33 provinces covered by the campaign (Büyüköztürk, 2005). A general increase in the number of girls in first grade was observed following the campaign. However, this trend was not monitored in transition from fifth to sixth grade and in seventh and eighth grades. Numbers pointed a substantial dropout from compulsory education after fifth grade. A statistically significant decrease in gender disparities occurred only in five out of 33 provinces. There was also improvement in 11 other provinces; however, these were not statistically significant (Büyüköztürk, 2005).

An important limitation of the campaign concerned data collection and monitoring ((Büyüköztürk, 2005). This is especially critical as girls who begin primary school should stay in

the school all the way through the eight grade. However, as the recent dropout monitoring research showed the current legislation does not acknowledge *dropouts* as an issue, thereby hindering its prevention and monitoring (Gökşen, et.al, 2006).

According to the official website of the campaign ([www.haydikizlarokula.org](http://www.haydikizlarokula.org)), local screenings have identified 273,447 out-of-schools girls between 2003-2006, of which 222,800 began or went back to school. However, a review conducted in 2003 prior to the campaign mentioned that 873,000 girls were out of school, based on MoNE 2003 data (Otaran, et.al., 2003).

An external evaluation of the program was prepared, yet, not made public so far.

### Conditional Cash Transfers

Conditional Cash Transfers (CCT) program was launched by the General Directorate of Social Assistance and Solidarity within the Social Risk Mitigation Project (SRMP) in 2003. SRMP emerged as a response to alleviate the impact of the 2001 economic crisis and received World Bank funding. CCT principally aimed at financing an expanded social safety net, targeted to the poorest six percent families with children, with the proviso of positive family behavioural change with respect to education, and health (World Bank, 2007).

#### **Box 3: Conditional Cash Transfers in numbers, July 2003 – December 2006**

Total applications (households)	1,603,581
Total grants (households)	855,906
Education support (individual)	1,563,253
Health support (individual)	876,978
Total mother candidates (individual)	24,190
Mothers who gave birth in hospitals (individual)	9,774
Total payments in education (YTL)	478,797,000
Total payments in health (YTL)	182,090,000
Total payments in pregnancy (YTL)	1,513,000
Total payments (YTL)	671,400,000

CCT is considered by many as an effective policy to alleviate the impact of the poverty on children's access to education. World Bank suggests extension of the program to promote girls' and poor students' access to secondary schools, drawing attention to "design of the program in order to avoid unintended consequences, such as promotion of birth rates or ratcheting up the expectations of those who are not covered by the program" (2005, p.47). Keyder and Üstündağ (2006) also suggest continuation of the CCT program and increasing its transparency to fix problems faced in implementation.

Issues as regards implementation have also been raised by administrators and teachers involved in the process. They complain that the implementation mechanism puts them in a monetary interaction with mothers, something which they felt very uncomfortable with. Moreover, a negative side-effect is presented as parents' changing perception of schools towards an aid agency vis-à-vis a learning institution (Keyder & Üstündağ, 2006). If the program will be extended, these feedbacks should be considered by policymakers.

An external evaluation of the program was prepared, yet, not made public so far.

### ***Involvement of non government actors***

Since 1997, non governmental actors have tackled demand side barriers before equal access to education. This trend gained a momentum after 2003 when MoNE and UNICEF together launched All Girls to School Campaign. There are four major projects run by non governmental

actors (Kancı, 2005), namely **Father Send Me to School, Raising Women, Contemporary Girls of Contemporary Turkey** and **I have a Daughter in Anatolia, She will be a Teacher**.

**Father, send me to School** project was launched by Milliyet, one of the major national newspapers of the country, to achieve universal schooling for girls. The project is conjunctly run with Association for Supporting Contemporary Life (ÇYDD), the primary NGO dealing with girls' education. It accommodates economic, social and political interventions and seeks to mobilize private sources to raise necessary funds for building and/or renovating schools, pensions and/or providing scholarships to deprived girls. The newspaper is often and effectively used to reach families, increase public awareness on girls' education and initiate change in patriarchal structures within the society.

**Raising Women** is run together by Mother and Child Education Foundation (AÇEV), Association for Supporting and Training Women Candidates (KA.DER) and Education Reform Initiative (ERI) and financed by a three year grant from the European Commission. It aims at reducing gender parities in education through functional and political literacy, parent training, collective action and advocacy. This reflects a more holistic understanding of gender as women and girls in Turkey face discrimination through a patriarchal system (Aksay & Sayın, 2005). Therefore, it includes interventions at individual, community and policy-making levels. At the individual level, the main activities are the development and application of literacy programmes to provide training to 7000 women. At the community level, the activities include parent education seminars, community information and communication sessions and dialogue meetings with community representatives, all of which will reach out to 2400 parents, 40 local leaders and 25 local journalists. At the policy-making level, the project aims to develop a model for gender disaggregated data for dropout rates; capacity-building for NGO monitoring of gender inequity; facilitation of local and national conferences and workshops; identification and dissemination of 'best practice'; awareness-raising sessions for journalists and the development.

#### **Box 4: An indigenous alternative for monitoring progress**

The aim of the Civil Monitoring Groups Report 2005, prepared by the Diyarbakır, Istanbul, Mardin, and Şanlıurfa Civil Monitoring Groups, is to inform the public of the process involved in achieving Education for All goals, as well as to contribute to the process itself.

One of the most important tasks of civil initiatives is to monitor the existing weaknesses in the education system and offer feedback. In this context, gender inequality in education within a specific year or period requires study, as developments need to be evaluated according to the given circumstances. Through close monitoring, the Civil Monitoring Groups Report 2005 contributes to the promotion of the schooling of girls by defining the existing situation.

This Report, prepared by civilians, describes the educational sector on both at national and local level, and constitutes a framework document which is intended for discussion by all shareholders from policy makers to policy implementers. We hope that the report will impact local and national policies, and promote collaboration among existing initiatives sustained by civic and public institutions to combat gender inequality in education.

*From the 'Millennium Goals and Gender Equity in Education: National and Local Civil Monitoring Groups Evaluation*

**Contemporary Girls of Contemporary Turkey (CGCT)** and **I have a Daughter in Anatolia, She will be a Teacher** are both run by ÇYDD and aim at providing equal opportunities to girls whose families are economically deprived (Kancı, 2005). CGCT has been going on since 1997, yet, significantly expanded and became more visible after it partnered with Turkcell, the biggest mobile telecom operator of the country, in 2000. Turkcell provides scholarships to 5000 girls annually as part of this project, which won numerous international and national awards on corporate social responsibility. In addition to reaching to deprived girls directly, the project had significant contribution to visibility of girls' education issue through a communication campaign titled **Snowdrops**, which included a narrative story and a special song written and performed by Sezen Aksu, one of the country's most admired singers. In addition to financial aid, ÇYDD

monitor girls in the program, supports them with mentor programs and partners with private high schools to provide a quality secondary education to a selected number of them.

**I have a Daughter in Anatolia, She will be a Teacher** project is a very similar program, except that it draws other financial sources from various corporations and individuals.

These non-governmental initiatives tackling equity issues are critical for achieving EFA goals in Turkey. Yet, lately there is consensus among non-governmental actors that issues concerning girls' education are beyond the capacity of the private and civil sectors.<sup>4</sup> At the end of the day, these projects can reach a limited number of children or illiterate women and most of the time symptoms would be addressed vis-à-vis root causes. Therefore, access of marginalised and vulnerable children should be a government priority, even further than the current levels.

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<sup>4</sup> A group of NGOs and scholars are in the process of drafting a manifesto on children's right to education and government's obligation to assure the fulfillment of these rights and planning an advocacy campaign to demand more political and bureaucratic will and support.

**Table 2: Barriers before girls' access to and completion of school and campaigns/projects/initiatives implemented in the field (Kancı, 2005)**

<b>BARRIERS BEFORE GIRLS' EDUCATION</b>		<b>All Girls to School</b>	<b>Father send met to school</b>	<b>SBEP</b>	<b>Raising women</b>	<b>Contemporary Girls of Contemporary Turkey</b>	<b>I have a daughter in Anatolia, she will be a teacher</b>	<b>CCT</b>
Socio-economic barrier	Poverty	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX
	Geographical inequalities	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX
	Issues as regards urbanization							
	Migration			XX	XX			
	Seasonal agriculture laborer							
	Family background – education level			XX	XX			
	Demographic reasons							
	Unregistered children	XX						
	Women's unemployability				X	X	X	
	Direct costs of schooling		XX			XX	XX	XX
Political-institutional barriers	Issues as regards education policy and programs	X	X	XX	X			
	Issues as regards quality of education and teachers	XX	X	XX	X			
	Lack of gender sensitivity among administrators and teachers	XX			X			
	Inadequate public funding for education		X	X	X		X	
	Quantitative inadequacies of formal education institutions	X	XX	XX	X		XX	
	Qualitative inadequacies of formal education institutions	X	X	XX	X		XX	
	Qualitative inadequacies of pensions	X	XX	XX	X		XX	
	Issues as regards bussing students	X	X		X			
	Unsafe, child-unfriendly schools	XX	X		X			
	Lack of specific interventions for children under risk	X		XX	XX			
	Inadequacy and ineffectiveness of legislations and sanctions		X		X			
Cultural barriers	Patriarchal structures	X			XX			
	Language issue							
	Lack of a culture promoting democratic individuality	X	X		XX	X	X	
	Issues related to religion and traditions	XX	XX		X			
	Early marriage	X	XX		X	X	X	
	Gender role models		X			XX		
	Lack of awareness and sensitivity of families towards education	XX	XX	XX	XX			
	A negative cultural climate / opinions	XX	XX		XX			
Popular culture's negative impact on education	XX	XX		XX	XX			

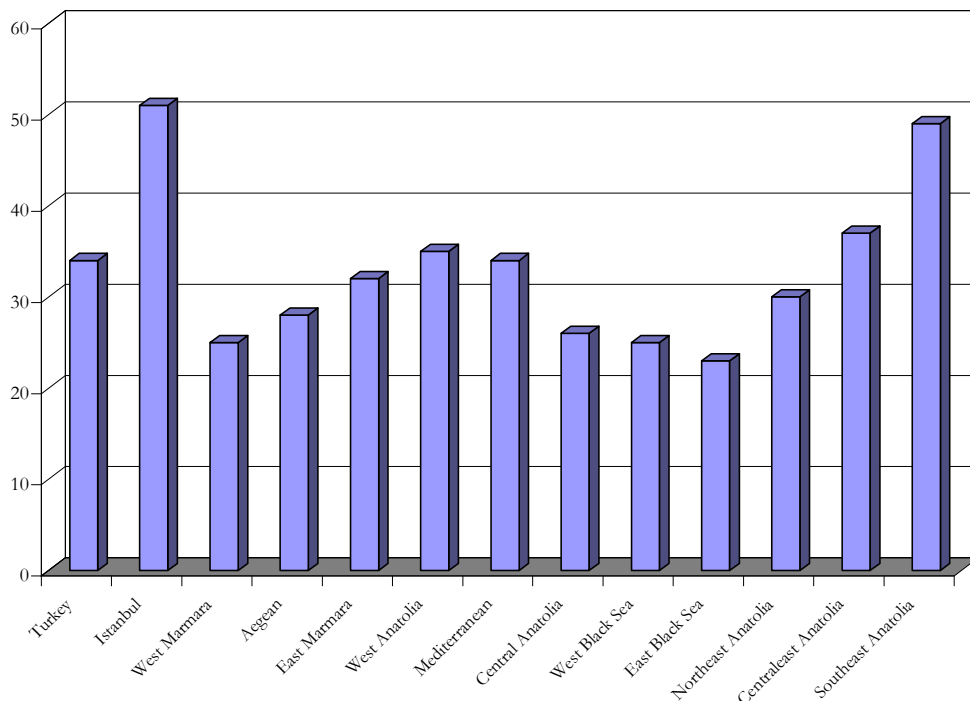
**X:** There is limited and indirect activity      **XX:** There is substantial activity

## Good quality schooling

### *Inputs*

As mentioned before, substantial investments have been made in expanding and improving physical capacity of schools over the last decade. However, there are still disparities in distribution of resources and inputs across regions and schools (World Bank, 2005). Attention was drawn to lack of quality standards for school inputs and targeted investments. Disparities often impact rural schools and households of lower economic status. A research showed that 55 percent of rural parents reported problems with their schools, compared to only 32 percent of urban parents. Also, poorer households report more concerns about the quality of their children's schools than wealthier ones (World Bank, 2005). The figure below shows the disparities across regions in terms of student/classroom ratio. Northeast, East and Southeast Anatolia regions also lag behind in distribution of education materials.

**Figure 5: Number of students per classroom in primary across 13 statistical regions (MoNE, 2007)**



In response to this situation, MoNE launched the “e-investment project” in late 2005. Main objective of this new initiative is to assure equitable allocation of limited public resources and their effective use.

### *Curriculum and textbooks*

The Board of Education (BoE) launched the most comprehensive curriculum reform in decades in 2003. The process began with foundation courses (Mathematic, Turkish, Life Skills, Social Sciences and Science and Technology) at the first level of primary (grades 1-5) and has been continuing since then towards higher grades and to cover wider subject areas. So far, curricula for Grades 1-6 have been developed, piloted and implemented in all schools (Wort, 2007). Pilot implementation continues in Grade 7 during 2006-07 academic year.

An important characteristic of the new curriculum has been the change of the pedagogy, accommodating “a constructivist approach to teaching and learning, including active learning, multiple intelligence theory, and different types of assessments” (Wort, 2007, p. 14). The Curriculum Review Commission (2005), evaluated the new programs “as a great step in

supporting the multifaceted development of students and laying the foundation for the transformation from ‘passive citizens’ to ‘active citizens’”.

**Box 5: Comparison with prior curricula (Curriculum Review Commission, 2005)**

- The curricula exhibit an innovative perspective in general
- Thematic approach is employed in the organization of contents and the learning domains are defined within this framework
- Terminology used for the learning outcomes is extremely different (newly used “acquisitions” vs. former “objectives, targets and targeted behavior”)
- The new curricula accentuate skills (such as critical thinking, creative thinking, communication, problem solving, research, decision-making)
- The learning-teaching processes and the role of the teacher are elaborated in a more detailed manner
- Use of instruments and materials is promoted and more concrete examples are given in relation to this subject
- Measurements and evaluation are related not only to the outcome but also the process

However, the Commission also drew attention to implementation, underlying its critical importance even more than the conceptual development phase. Teachers and teacher training are considered as critical success factors. It was stated that “there is no chance of success for this reform if the teachers decline to reorganize the learning processes in class in accordance with the current curricula or lack the necessary skills to do so (Curriculum Review Commission, 2005).”

Parallel to the curriculum reform process, new textbooks have been written. For the first time, teacher guides were prepared (Wort, 2007).

The flexibility of curriculum is a debatable issue in Turkey. BoE argues that the new curriculum is more flexible than the previous one. However, stakeholders are not satisfied with the progress and ask for more flexibility.

Turkey’s track record on gender sensitivity in education has not been encouraging until recently. A survey of previous textbooks had identified that “gender discrimination exist[ed] generally and widely in every subject and level” (Tanrıöver, 2004, p.197). This fact further supported the argument that “gender discrimination in Turkey is one of the basic cultural elements in the most general meaning of the world” (Tanrıöver, 2004, p.198).

These assessments were made available by the “Promoting Human Rights in Primary and Secondary School Textbooks” project, which was realized by the History Foundation in cooperation with the Academy of Science and the Human Rights Foundation (Silier, 2004). Violations of various articles of international human rights conventions, including Articles 2/1, 3, 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights (Gemalmaz, 2004) were identified throughout the screening of 190 textbooks of different subjects. Indeed, these textbooks as well as the curricula provided “misinformation and incomplete information regarding human right issues ... openly discriminate[d] between people, group, nations, etc,” (Ceylan & Irzik, 2004, p. 3) women often being among “the wronged party” (Tanrıöver, 2004, p. 193).

The curriculum reform and new textbooks were prepared after these assessments. The BoE argues there have been improvements in curricula especially as regards gender sensitivity. One of the few assessments realized so far however still points to serious gender discriminations (Tan, 2005).

On the other hand, the proportion of female administrators is very low relative to proportion of female teachers (Eğitim-Sen, 2005). While female teachers constitute 43.8 percent of the teacher

force at the primary level, only 3.15 percent of school principals are women based on 2001 figures. The school is still seen as primarily male-dominated social space ((Eğitim-Sen, 2005). The only female senior official within MoNE is the Director General of Women Technical Education and only one women seats on the 15 person Board of Education.

EFA Goals emphasizes 'gender parity' and 'gender equity' as two different, yet, complementary objectives. While there has been more awareness on and efforts to assure gender parity in Turkey, especially in terms of equal access, there is a lack of strong political and bureaucratic will to make progress on gender equity. Gender discrimination, the hindering impact of traditional gender role in girls' education are critical social issues for the country.

### ***Assessments***

National assessments in Turkey go back to 1992; students' success on various subject are measured every three years. The objective is to assess what kind of skills students completing eight-year basic education acquired and to what extent, and take a picture of the education system in general. Lately, these exams assessed students' knowledge of Turkish, Mathematics, Science and Social Sciences in 2002 and 2005 and English and computer literacy in 2004. In addition, Turkey has also participated in international assessments since 1999, namely in TIMSS 1999, PIRLS 2001 and PISA 2003 and 2006. MoNE also plans to take place in TIMSS-R in 2007.

It is stated that these assessments are used to improve teaching and learning classroom. Yet, so far there is no evidence that there have been improvements in learning outcomes. Publication of the results of 2005 national assessment and 2006 PISA could provide an opportunity to monitor the progress. It is critical that MoNE continuously participate in international assessments as well. An important opportunity was missed when Turkey did not participate in TIMSS 2004. The government should really see these assessments as an important policy tool and aim at using it as much as possible to assess and monitor student achievement, especially in comparison to other countries.

On the other hand, the negative impact of the university entrance exams on secondary education still continues. The World Bank Education Sector Study suggests that "many educators in Turkey do not consider the selection examinations appropriate drivers of educational quality or improvement" (World Bank, 2005, p. 21). OECD report draws attention to the fact there is "intentionally no alignment of the university entrance examination and the secondary school curriculum" (OECD, 2005, p. 865).

Indeed, in 2005 more than 1.7 million people took the very competitive university entrance exam, two-thirds of whom were sitting the exam for at least a second time. This figure alone suggests that a university education is increasingly perceived as the sole means of social mobility in Turkey. The incredible 1 billion U.S. dollars spent annually by households on private courses to prepare students for the exams is another important indicator of the role of education in upward social mobility. Yet only 11 percent of those who took the exam were placed at a four-year university program while 4 percent entered two-year programs at universities with a vocational focus and 13 percent were taking distance-learning courses through open universities.

Unfortunately, the political tension between the two governing bodies involved with university entrance exams, MoNE and HEC, impedes any reform attempts.

### ***School governance***

As mentioned previously, Turkey has a very centralized education system, which gives little financial and administrative autonomy to schools. Although there are no attempts to devolve some decisions to schools, MoNE has been piloting UNICEF's "child-friendly schools" for some time to improve schools in general and increase the institutional capacity as well.

## ***Teachers***

Education reform is of critical importance for Turkey. So are teachers for education reform. However, they are almost the weakest link in the education circle: “Turkey has ample of opportunity to institute policy improvements that could generate learning gains across a number of areas, the most important of which is teacher quality” says the Education Sector Study (World Bank, 2005, p. 23). OECD further adds that “improving quality of human resources at every level of the system –teachers, school principals, guidance counselors, inspectors, MoNE officials- must be priority” (OECD, 2005, p.97).

### **MoNE’s initiatives to improve teacher policies**

Pre-service training of teachers was restructured by YÖK through a World Bank project in 1998. According to the restructuring, preschool and primary teachers are trained at the undergraduate level. At the secondary level, Science, Mathematics and Social Sciences teachers must attend a one and a half year master’s program after completing undergraduate studies. All other secondary teachers are required to have an undergraduate diploma.

MoNE undertook two separate projects with important distance-learning components to meet the demand for English language teachers and preschool teachers in 2000 in collaboration with the Anadolu University, which is very competent in providing distant education services. The preschool project enabled the graduates from child development and education divisions of girls’ vocational schools to enroll in the two-year Open University programs and meanwhile work as a ‘master instructor’ position in nearby schools. This project is considered to increase the number of children accessed, yet, not of potential to fulfill the teacher shortage at preschool level (Bekman & Gürlesel, 2005). According to the same report, the effectiveness of this model in terms of teaching profession is still debated.

*The norm staffing*, a policy adopted in 1998 to prevent teacher imbalances in schools, was modified in 2003. This policy basically aims at attaining and maintaining minimum standards as regards teachers in schools, i.e. adequate number of personnel with required competencies, number of lessons teachers can teach, etc.

A new legislation on assignment and change of location of teachers was enacted in 2000, which introduced a new regional classification. Accordingly, Turkey was divided to three regions, two of which included least developed provinces. Public school teachers are obliged to serve a compulsory term of three to four years in at least one of these two regions. This policy was introduced to meet the teacher shortage in provinces which were not preferred by new teachers. However, stakeholders in some of these least developed provinces, such as Diyarbakır, Mardin and Şanlıurfa on the South East Anatolia, draw attention to weaknesses of this policy.<sup>5</sup> According to them, inexperienced teachers struggle in disadvantaged schools in the beginning, rarely develop a sense of belonging with an eye on always on their next assignment and leave as they gradually get familiar with students, parents, community and the neighborhood. Thus, they argue, teacher turnaround is high and teaching and learning quality is low.

MoNE moved the assignment of new teachers to schools and of existing teacher between districts and provinces to a computerized system. Assignment of first-time teachers is based on the results of Public Staff Selection Exam, which takes into account general culture (30 percent), general ability (30 percent) and educational sciences (40 percent) (OECD, 2005). Between 2003-2006, approximately 80,000 new teachers are added to the teaching force.

A new promotion code was introduced in 2006, identifying a new hierarchical organization with three categories: Teachers, Specialist Teachers and Head Teachers. There are quotas for specialist teacher and head teacher positions and teachers are promoted according to a comprehensive

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<sup>5</sup> Provincial workshops

evaluation, including an assessment test. In addition to test results (50 percent), seniority (10 percent), in-service training and graduate studies (20 percent), extra-curricular activities in science, culture, arts and sport (10 percent) and previous professional records (10 percent) are taken into consideration. Last year, 92,382 teachers were promoted to Specialist Teacher positions and 338 to Head Teacher positions and will receive a monetary recognition as well.

The development of **General Competencies for Teaching Profession** is finalized in 2006. Six main competences are identified together with 31 sub-competencies and 233 performance criteria. These will serve to defining teachers' job descriptions and setting clear goals for their personal and professional development. A **Guide for School-Based Professional Development** was developed and now being piloted in 72 schools across six provinces. 1350 teachers are preparing their own action plans for professional development. According to Wort (2007), the overall target is to have all teachers prepare their action plan within the next five years.

In-service training of the existing teacher force has become an urgent need as the new curriculum brought many changes, including positioning teachers as "facilitators," "guide," and "mentor" rather than "teacher" (Curriculum Review Commission, 2005). MoNE with the support from the Support to Basic Education Project provided in-service training to nearly 60,000 teachers, of which just over 41,000 were targeted from disadvantaged and high migration areas, to complement the curriculum reform (Wort, 2007).

### **Main issues**

Several critical issues have been highlighted by recent assessments. An important one is a governance issue, which concerns mostly pre-service training of teachers; MoNE control almost all aspects of teacher policies except initial teacher education at the university level, which is under the jurisdiction of the YÖK and delivered by faculties of education (World Bank, 2005). There are communication flaws within this triangle. The political tension between MoNE and YÖK impedes their communication, as a result MoNE practically have no influence on their future labor force.

On the other hand, YÖK and faculties of education still disagree over the restructuring that took place in 1997. Faculty members believe the restructuring weakened educational research in universities. Between 1997-2003, the number of students in undergraduate educational science programs declined by 54 percent, while the number of students in undergraduate teacher education programs increased by 76 percent (Özsoy & Ünal, 2005). Similarly, number of graduate students in teacher education programs increased more rapidly. However, student/teacher ratios declined especially in teacher education programs as increase in the number of faculty (30 percent) was significantly lower (Özsoy & Ünal, 2005).

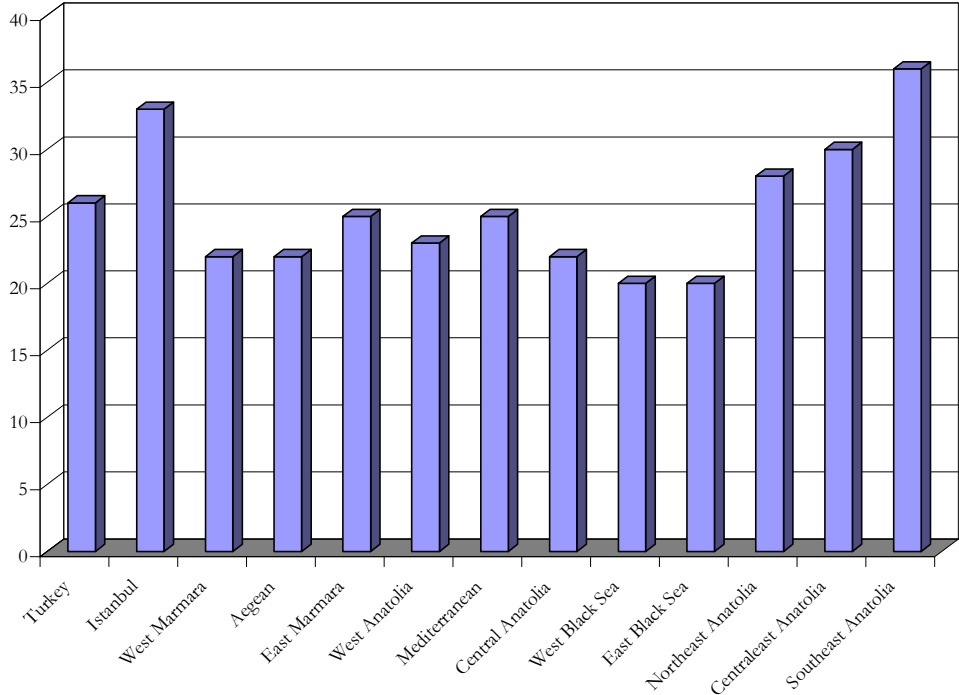
As regards in-service training, evaluations suggest "a very high level of trainee satisfaction with regard to quality, relevance and usefulness of training" provided within the Support to Basic Education Project (Wort, 2007). However, MoNE's annual in-service training courses are criticized by administrators and teachers (Aydoğan, 2002, cited in Sucuoğlu, et. al., 2006). Moreover, only 59.5 percent of teachers stated that they participated in some form of in-service training program (Eğitim Bir-Sen, 2004, cited in Sucuoğlu, et. al., 2006).

OECD report (2005) argues that "despite the 'norm staffing' policies, Turkey continues to face a major challenge in matching available teachers with local needs" (p. 100). This is also demonstrated by recent statistics on student/teacher ratios shown in Figure 4. Disparities between provinces can be more radical, student/teacher ratio can vary between 15 in Tunceli to 47 in Şırnak. Centralized administration of human resources and lack of provisional authority to respond to emerging needs in a timely manner is criticized for these disparities (OECD, 2005).

Teacher shortage, especially in foreign language, ICT and counseling, is also acknowledged in DPT plans and programs (DPT, 2006; DPT, 2007). The government plans to complement norm

staffing policy by introducing incentives attached to geographic locations and other criteria (DPT, 2007).

Figure 6: Number of students per norm teacher across 13 statistical regions in Turkey (MoNE, 2007)



## **Policy Conclusions**

Turkey has taken part within the EFA framework since the Jomtien Conference in 1990. The influence of the campaign on Turkish national education policy in general and on the origins of the expansion of basic education was demonstrated by the policy analysis of the Law 4306, which introduced a new eight-year compulsory education system in 1997 (Aydagül, 2002). The 1997 Basic Education Program became successful in rapidly increasing the coverage of compulsory education (Dülger, 2004). The program had adopted a “bing-bang” model, which was assessed as a successful strategy in launching equity-oriented policy reforms in education. Moreover, achieving social inclusion and involving stakeholders were identified as critical for institutional, social and economic sustainability of the reform (Dülger, 2004).

As part of the EFA framework, Turkey presented a country assessment prior to Dakar Conference in 2000 and subsequently a National Plan of Action two years later. The latter included a significant number of projects to be either continued or implemented to achieve EFA’s six goals.

Indeed, the research conducted showed that many reform initiatives have been undertaken since Dakar Conference. Their effectiveness is yet to be seen as Turkey is still far from realizing any of the six EFA goals. It is neither possible to establish a relationship between these initiatives and the progress made so far nor measure their cost-effectiveness due to the lack of empirical assessments. This issue significantly limited the inclusion of more empirical assessment in the country case study.

Nevertheless, the data collected provides a satisfactory foundation for reviewing Turkey’s six years of performance since Dakar towards achieving EFA goals. This closing section presents a few critical issues for advancing national efforts to achieve quality education for all.

### ***Political and economic support for education reform***

The political and economic stability Turkey has had since the last general elections has provided the bureaucracy with a more enabling environment to tackle urgent policy needs. This stability has done certainly good to education sector. The Minister of National Education will have completed its fourth and half year in duty by the next elections in November 2006. Long standing political leadership can provide a bureaucracy with room to think of and plan long term reforms. A good example was the undertaking of the most comprehensive curriculum reform in Turkey in decades.

It is therefore important that the next government of Turkey, whether as a single party or a coalition government, sustains and further increases political will for education reform. Some major obstacles before realizing EFA Goals, such as social barriers before gender parity and equity, can only be removed through a very committed and strong government. Similarly, the need for reforming public sector is an urgency for increasing governance capacity and effectiveness in many social sectors, thereby should be a policy priority for the next government.

On the other hand, education sector benefited from increased public and private spending in education. Whilst this has been a welcomed progress, public spending of average 4 percent of GDP on education is still far from the 6 percent threshold suggested by the former Special Rapporteur on Right to Education. If economic stability and growth can be sustained in the coming years, Turkey should aim at increasing public spending on education. Priority should be given to assuring all children have access to free and quality pre and primary education.

### ***The need for adopting strategy-oriented sector policy***

Despite post-Dakar efforts, Turkey has serious equity and quality issues to tackle in the coming years to achieve EFA Goals by 2015. A critical success factor will be the capacity and quality of

policy-making within MoNE. Research showed that an important flaw of previous and current policy initiatives has been lack of a strategy-oriented sector policy. This issue has also been raised by international assessments by the World Bank (2005), OECD (2005) and the Delegation of European Commission to Turkey (Wort, 2007).

For example, Wort argues that “there are is no overall strategy that brings together reforms in curriculum, setting of teacher and principal competencies, in-service and pre-service teacher training and assessment systems” (2007, p.17). He adds, “many current reforms are taking place independently of each other without due consideration of their strategic alliance” (p.17). OECD report recommends that “the nation must move from highly fragmented, uncoordinated initiatives and pilot programs, to systematic reform. ... [K]ey reform elements ... must be aligned with each other and national goals and standards” (2005, p.114).

On the other hand, Tan (2005) points to the lack of a systematic and comprehensive approach among initiatives to assure gender parity and equity, drawing attention to difficulties of achieving systematic transformation through partial changes in education system.

It is, therefore, very critical that the newly introduced strategic planning process within MoNE functions in an effective and timely manner. The Education Sector Study already describes the emergence of an education sector strategy in Turkey, which sets a good foundation to begin with. Stepping up the formulation of a strategy-oriented education sector policy could certainly catalyze the overall education reform process.

**Box 6: The Emergence of an Education Sector Strategy in Turkey (World Bank, 2005, p.36)**

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.

### ***Evaluation and accountability of education policy-making***

A very important conclusion of this research is the deficit of assessments on the impact and cost-effectiveness of public policies, programs and projects implemented to achieve equity and quality in education. It can be argued that this derives to some extent from the lack of a strategy-oriented policy approach. Most of the time, the policy life cycle finishes short of an empirical, objective and rigorous evaluation phase, impeding further policy making cycles. Whereas, lessons learned from previous policy experiences could constitute a rich learning source for the MoNE.

The current capacity and activities of the Department of Research and Development within MoNE could be improved to better serve this need. Also, there is definitely room for further progress in collaboration with universities. The government and YÖK should promote and support universities to undertake more quantitative and inter-disciplinary research in education sector. As such, scholars in faculties of education should be able to allocate more time to applied research.

### ***A new national impetus to increase quality***

The success of the basic education reform campaign of 1997 is a good example of the effectiveness of a large-scale education reform owned and supported by all stakeholders. A decade later, Turkey could certainly benefit from a similar campaign and renewed dedication to increase quality of education, one which should put schools at the center. The necessity for a national impetus becomes more important given the complexity of ensuring adequate learning opportunities for all in a big system lacking

The next wave of reform should aim at increasing human, physical and financial capacity of each school. Turkey can no longer tolerate schools that neither have some degree of organizational and financial autonomy nor have competent administrators and teachers. Accordingly, schools need to be developed as dependable and reputable learning institutions in all over the country. Teachers should constitute the most important element within this framework. The new curricula require them to deliver new skills, using new teaching and assessment methods. This necessitates re-training of almost 600,000 teachers in the teaching force while modifying pre-service training to respond to emerging professional needs.

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