

“TURKEY - EDUCATION SECTOR STUDY” CONFERENCE

Distinguished guests, now I give the floor to Mr. Kemal Madenođlu from the State Planning Organization to make his presentation on “Education in the 9th Development Plan and Linkages to the Education Sector Study”.

MR. KEMAL MADENOĐLU- Although being the last presenter poses some advantages, I believe that there are more disadvantages than advantages. I will try to minimize these disadvantages to the degree possible and will try to speak as brief as possible not to cause any further tiredness at the end of the day, while adding to the joy you have you have had today. My closing remarks will also consolidate the question marks in your mind and will add new questions.

Now, the theme of my presentation is shown as “Education in the 9th Development Plan and Linkages to the Education Sector Study” in the conference program.

First, I would like to clarify that the 9th Development Plan has not yet been issued. As you know, development plans are finally approved by the Parliament. The State Planning Organization prepares the development program, forwards it to the Council of Ministers and the Council of Ministers presents the final version of the development program to the Parliament. It takes effect after it is debated and adopted by the Parliament.

Currently, the plan is in the preparation process.

There is no clear idea about what the 9th development plan will involve. But, I will try to briefly recap the preparatory work conducted for the plan.

First, as you know, we traditionally have specialized commissions for each plan for many years; we have commissions for almost every sector. For the education sector, our commissions for primary, secondary and tertiary education have convened and prepared reports with the participation of experts and representatives from the relevant public agencies, non-governmental organizations and universities. We have undergone a process in which the specialized commissions convened and prepared their reports. But, the preparatory does not only comprise of this.

We have undertaken an additional phase of this preparatory work. As you know, the previous development plans were 5-year plans and this 9th plan has been designed as a 7-year plan for harmonization with the European Union.

To this end, we have also conducted a study to specify the level which Turkey wants to reach seven years later. We have brought together a wide range of people representing various sectors of the society, from macro-economy to education and health. These people have previously taken part in planning and organization tasks at high levels in the public sector or international organizations. Then, we have brought together the undersecretaries of all public agencies and obtained significant contributions from all these people. The strategy of the plan is currently being developed.

Therefore, as there is no development plan in place, what I am going to do is just briefly recap the work conducted so far. In particular, I will dwell on the conclusions reached by the specialized commissions, which are the most widely participated organs.

In fact, this study of the World Bank has much in common with the studies of our specialized commissions for the development plan. But

there are some contrasts as well. I will indicate them, but I would like to dwell on these main areas briefly.

This report has revealed four “main strategic areas”. First one is the minimization of differences of access and inequities, which are parallel to the report. Second one is the expansion of high-quality educational opportunities. Third one is to introduce quality, assurance and standards for education. And, finally, the fourth strategic area is the issue of institutional capacity, which in fact is referred to in the report, but not much expressed here today.

I attach great importance to this aspect of education. When you ask “how individuals do you want to educate within this educational system?”, we want to educate individuals who can stand on their own feet, who can live at high standards and who can respond to all evolving circumstances.

These are the expectations from the educational system.

In fact, the same applies to our institutional structures which will facilitate the achievement of these objectives. That is, we aim at establishing a structure that is not based on “memorization”, which has been prevalent for many years. Rather, we aim at establishing a structure whereby students can adapt themselves to changing conditions, look forward and acquire the competencies required to this effect.

As far as the issue of institutional capacity is concerned, in addition to the content-focused discussions held so far, we must also spare some time for institutional capacity and set forth the expectations from our institutions besides the expectations from students and the educational system.

The institutions and agencies responsible for education in Turkey must be able to introduce innovations, not be based on “memorization”, must be able to respond to changing conditions and

must be able to look forward so that we can organize our educational system accordingly.

In fact, this is the most important issue we have to address today and it is an issue that requires us to take future-oriented steps to this end.

Therefore, this issue is very important as expressed by Mr. Batuhan in the other parallel session –I was not in that group; I was in the secondary education session. This issue is very important.

This study has helped us to look at the issue from a different perspective, which has been neglected by many of our public agencies and even non-governmental organizations traditionally.

What is that perspective? First, the issue is addressed through an analytical approach. Based on this analytical findings, the main areas of issues and leverage points are identified. Then, a series of strategic areas and priorities are identified.

In fact, this is the ideal approach but many of institutions – including my organization, as a self-criticism- have unfortunately failed to adopt such a structure.

I even believe that we have serious problems in this regard as a nation. Unfortunately we have not satisfactorily adopted an approach for analytically assessing an issue we encounter and then try to overcome that issue by setting and prioritizing targets accordingly. I don't mean that such an approach is totally absent, but it is not satisfactory.

For a sector like education, which has a key function in growing up generations, the lack of such an approach manifests itself more clearly.

In this respect, I believe that this issue must be discussed more in detail on a separate platform with the Ministry of National Education, other institutions responsible for education, all stakeholders, non-

governmental organizations, universities, as a management issue –and I don't take it as a problem of only the Ministry of National Education, but it is an issue for all relevant institutions including local administrations.

If we fail to do this, unfortunately it will not be possible to carry into reality all these analyses, all the recommendation raised here and the studies conducted so far. Thus it will not be possible to take step forward in this respect.

I would like to underscore this issue again –many of the participants here are aware of this fact- but I would like to underscore it again.

Another issue I would like to raise is our inadequacy in analyzing our existing situation in education, especially considering the size of our geography and population. Although we have a big capacity for research and analysis, this is a key issue particularly for universities, as I have discussed with friends from universities during the break.

Although we have many departments, faculties, members of teaching staff and research assistants at universities, particularly specialized on education, we have not yet established a mechanism that utilizes this capacity to respond to the needs of our country, by identifying, highlighting and resolving these issues.

This failure applies to many areas, but is of particular significance in the area of education since the subject matter of education is “human being”. Unfortunately, we have failed to put in place and run a system and mechanism that will facilitate a series of studies, analyses, policies, practices and feedback processes that are peculiar to us, as independent and in addition to the experience in other parts of the world. I see this as a critical problem.

In order to educate individuals who are useful for both their country and the world, it is important to transform our outcome-focused educational system and culture.

Preschool education has been emphasized commonly. Also, the issue of imbalance in the level of achievement -which means a very low percentage of students are successful and a vast majority lags behind- is in fact a very important deadlock for Turkey and I believe we will overcome this deadlock in the coming years by putting more focus on this issue.

Meanwhile, we must recognize a fact: there is no final solution in the area of education –I am not specialized on education, but my experience and observations confirm this. This is a way of solution. One cannot say “Right, I have found the correct solution and it’s over.” I necessitates a constant search and a constant transformation. Both the reality and the nature of education requires this search and transformation. We must recognize the fact that it is never “over”.

We will continue discussing the OSS system as well as the secondary education and tertiary education in that framework.

One of the most critical issues Turkey is faced with currently is the issue of “teachers”. I have been intensively working on this issue for the last one and a half years. I have been doing my best and I believe a serious breakthrough will begin in this regard very shortly.

With regard to access to education and quality of education, our priority problem was educational infrastructure. Irrespective of however much you endeavor to increase the quality of education, it is not possible to achieve it if you have 50-60-70 students in a classroom. Therefore, infrastructure is critical.

Indeed, we have made significant progress in the last three or four years. We cannot deny the contributions of the public sector, private sector and non-governmental organizations.

Meanwhile, a significant curriculum study has been conducted for the contents of education. This curriculum study is indeed admirable. I really would like to congratulate the Education Board for its good work. However, we have not yet managed to put in place the tools that will make it operational.

Therefore, the key factor in making it operational is teachers. It is very difficult for our teachers to adapt themselves to this new model in respect of both the way in which they are trained and the environment in which they work. We must acknowledge this fact; this is a reality. Also, this curriculum reform involves a fundamental shift in the way of thinking.

For this reason, you cannot envisage a shift like a shift in any ordinary technical way of teaching. There is a need for a comprehensive transformation in the mentality. This really necessitates a large-scale breakthrough. It necessitates continuous training for existing teachers

I am particularly pleased to hear that a joint study has been launched YÖK. I have just recently learnt this.

But, we have to improve the communicational capacity of our existing teachers as soon as possible, perhaps by training teacher trainers; because we need facilitator teachers rather than instructing teachers, which is a significant transformation for a teacher. We can only do this by way of teacher trainers with improved communicational skills or through continuous training programs.

I don't believe there is a financing constraint in Turkey in this respect; since there is no substantial financing need for this purpose.

But we need dedicated individuals for this task, nationwide. I believe much falls on the part of non-governmental organizations in this task. I urge non-governmental organizations to be involved in this effort.

The issue of managing schools and providing powers, funds and autonomy to schools under this centralized and decentralized structure is of particular significance in the context of institutional capacity and the understanding of learning institutions. We are aware of the inequities in the distribution of funds and its implications on access, particularly with respect to the *dersane* process, as well as regional disparities and differences among various income groups. Life-long learning...

As regards the approach to be adopted within the framework of reform areas; in fact the strategic approach expressed both in the report prepared by our specialized commission and in the report discussed here -and I would like to refer to the report we have prepared- requires a policy making process that is based on communication and efficient dialogue to achieve these goals.

As evident from this conference, the exchange of information among us –I mean the sharing of knowledge both at the individual level and at the level of institutional responsibilities and views- will be the most important factor in soundly executing this process. We must continuously share our knowledge and maintain our dialogue, and we must always be open to innovations.

If we take the initial steps based on biases and fixed positions, it unfortunately seems difficult to achieve progress in a critical sector like education. Therefore, I attach great importance to dialogue. It is highly important to improve dialogue among institutions, individuals and various sectors and layers.

Institutional capacity is another premise. Another premise is an implementation process in which prioritized solid indicators and timed business processes are defined. These are needed to achieve a rapid transformation.

In the context of institutional capacity, delegation of a variety of powers in decision-making is also important. In order to ensure continuous monitoring and updating, it is important to put in place feedback processes.

Indeed, our studies for the development plan and the World Bank's study have much in common as regards their conclusions.

We are working very closely with the World Bank in many areas. The World Bank has been making significant contributions for our studies and for our country by transferring the worldwide experience to our country.

In fact, we are not aware of one fact, but when the World Bank transfers such knowledge and experience, we become aware of what is going on in the entire world, what experiences have been acquired, what problems have been encountered and how these problems have been overcome. Hence, we do not waste time thinking "if another country has adopted a different approach and obtained different consequences"

I regard this transfer of experience by the World Bank to our country as a vital contribution for certain areas that require comprehensive transformation. On this occasion, I would like to thank all the World Bank experts. The studies conducted in many areas are very important, but the studies conducted in the area of education are of distinct significance for us.

On behalf of my country, I would like to thank the World Bank representatives and staff for their contributions in both methodological aspects and in facilitating sharing all these knowledge and experience.

I do not want to take your time any more. In fact, I have much to talk about but time is too late. I know that I still have time according to the schedule, but all the participants have been here since 9 o'clock in the morning and they have spent their time and energy. I am sure that they are here because they are dedicated to achieving these goals and they attach importance to this work.

I hope that this dialogue will be maintained with international organizations, the government, non-governmental organizations, universities and local administrations. There is no single solution; we must all search for solutions.

If we discontinue this dialogue, we will always be too far away from the solution. That's why, let's maintain this dialogue and share our knowledge on a continuous basis. I wish you all have good evening."