

I would like to thank Mr. Ahmet Tıktık for his speech and now give the floor to Prof. Dr. Ziya Selçuk, Chairman of Education Board of MONE, who will speak on behalf of the Ministry.

PROF. DR. ZİYA SELÇUK – Good morning. I welcome you all. Mr. Vorkink, Mr. Undersecretary, distinguished guests... I believe that this sector conference co-organized by the State Planning Organization and the World Bank will be very successful. I am here to only make a welcome address on behalf of Mr. Minister. He assigned this duty to me since he is not in Turkey at present. In fact, I will express my detailed opinions about the report in the upcoming discussion session, therefore I will just deliver a welcome address for a few minutes here.

As you know, in parallel to the political and economic history of our country, education is one of the sectors that is most conservative, that is based on local standards and that has the highest degree of resistance to change.

Therefore, extensive criticisms on education have usually been perceived as a threat in the historical process.

Consequently, educational concepts have become a subject of social and political actuality, rather than a subject of educational science.

If a survey is to be held on the importance of education, almost the entire society would mark the choice “very important”. This awareness about the importance of education is in fact limited to the emotional feeling that “teachers are persons who really worth appreciation.”

Although this slogan awareness is tried to be improved through a number of individual and singular initiatives, it is obvious that we are faced with serious problems.

At this point, we have to make a decision..

Of course, we are not doing it for the sake of the World Bank or the European Union or other institutions and organizations.

We are making this reform for our children which we give ultimate care at schools. We are making this reform to rebuild and reproduce the future of this country.

However, considering the fact that we will be stuck in a narrow area when saying “education is a very important institution”, we must find good answers to the questions of what we can give up, what priorities can we eliminate or re-organize and what compromises can we make to restructure our education system, and enable our system to keep up with the conditions of international competition.

Otherwise, the emotional quagmire we are in and the emotional factors affecting our decision-making processes may drive us into irrational ways of thinking. For instance, a spelling error that has been caused mistakenly or by personal intention, may be posed by the media or some academic circles as a factor that might arise critical problems for our country or as a factor that may lead to the dissolution of our country.

I wanted to emphasize this fact to express the extent to which irrationality has reached.

Distinguished guests, no matter how complicated are the problems of our education system, we are not really desperate against such a complexity. We are aware of the options before us.

We are aware of what we can do and what we cannot do in the short run. With such awareness and through the a rational approach, we

think that Turkey can readily achieve many breakthroughs using her own resources, and even without resorting to some imaginary resources.

Although there are some constraints with respect to the budget allocated by our country and the opportunities provided in our country, we are aware of the fact that we have many advantages. For instance, whereas many countries have to allocate significant amounts of funds for a number of projects, we don't need to allocate funds or spare time for such problems. Perhaps, such problems are even not problem for our country.

We can create new financing models, human resources models and organizational structure options for all problems we encounter. We have the necessary know-how, and academic people. Indeed, these are not tasks which we, the Ministry of National Education, cannot accomplish.

But, we think that there must be a consensus and agreement on principles first. In the absence of consensus on principles, it seems unlikely that some subsequent technologic works and actions will be successful.

To exemplify a few principles; is an environment of confidence a prerequisite for the achievement of all these reforms? To achieve all these reforms, do we really need to set our priorities in writing and make projections accordingly? Is it important that the areas for which public funds will be spent and the areas of public interest overlap each other? It is possible to list more principles, but in the absence of a consensus on such principles, it seems unlikely that we will obtain successful results from the subsequent routines.

As known, the Ministry of National Education has been launching remarkable breakthroughs in recent years. You can start it by taking international norms as a basis.

These breakthroughs include the informatics infrastructure, information infrastructure, teacher qualifications, contents of the curriculum and the improvement of physical infrastructure in many other respects. We know that efforts aim achieving a significant progress within the framework of an ambitious projection.

At least, the number of meetings, panels, conferences and researches based on international norms and standards has increased. With the effect of the EU accession negotiations, we have acquired the culture of assessing our issues and performance within the framework of international concepts and international criteria. I believe this is an important advantage.

Undoubtedly, the Education Sector Study co-executed by the State Planning Organization and the World Bank will serve as a mirror for us, and will be a landmark for the Ministry of National Education for its future activities.

I believe that such studies will be very useful in specifying the future focus points of the Turkish education system and in identifying what responses must be given to what problems to be encountered in the future.

On behalf of the Ministry of National Education, I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to this study. On behalf of Mr. Minister and on my own behalf, I would like to express my gratitude. Thank you.”