

Chapter VI: Conclusions

75. Although Turkey has significantly expanded access to basic education in the last decade, important challenges await on two interrelated fronts: quality and equity. Turkey's educational system is currently of low quality relative to the growth and competitiveness

ambitions of the country and is also significantly more inequitable than most other OECD countries. Table 6.1 summarizes the expected impact of each of the policy options---pre-primary education, teachers, financing, and information--on the quality and equity of basic education.

Table 6.1: Summary of Policy Options and Expected Impact on Quality and Equity

Policy Area	Policy Options	Expected Impact
Pre-Primary Education	o <i>Modify the next stages of MONE's roll-out of the pre-primary education expansion program to ensure the country is able to meet its goal of universal access to kindergarten by 2014/15</i>	• Increased enrollment rate for 5-year-olds across the country and higher rates of return to education for the most disadvantaged provinces.
	o <i>Develop a quality assurance framework for public and private provision of early childhood education</i>	• Clearer goals for staff-to-child ratios, new requirements for early childhood educators, and the creation of a new quality rating system.
	o <i>Expand the information campaigns about the importance of early childhood education</i>	• Increased parents' desire for their children to start school earlier.
Teachers	o <i>Support and hold accountable new teachers in the first few years of teaching</i>	• Better environment for the teaching profession as a whole.
	o <i>Create new incentives — monetary and non-monetary — to attract and retain high-quality teachers</i>	• Better-remunerated, more highly motivated and more skillful teacher corps.
	o <i>Improve teacher training, aligning in-service with pre-service training, and establish school-based teacher training strategies</i>	• Better trained teachers and a less unequal distribution of skills across the teacher force, enhanced cooperation across teachers, and larger peer effects.
Financing	o <i>Introduce a new system for financing public education that uses formula funding arrangements based on capitation principles</i>	• Higher levels of inputs to improve the quality of the most disadvantaged schools.
	o <i>Increase targeting of public resources towards the groups with the greatest needs and the highest returns to education</i>	• Higher rates of return to education from the investment in those groups (e.g. lower levels of education, most disadvantaged regions, and girls).
	o <i>Overhaul the current system of secondary and tertiary education entrance exams</i>	• Reduced reliance on private funding for private tutoring or re-investment of these funds into the public system for quality-enhancement activities.
Information	o <i>Encourage public discussion on education through the production an annual report of the state of basic education in Turkey</i>	• Improved knowledge and understanding of the performance of the education system; more discussion and support for education reform.
	o <i>Make information on individual schools, including inputs and outcomes, widely available to the public through the creation of school report cards for basic education</i>	• Improved transparency and accountability at the school level; empowered parents and students.
	o <i>Improve the coverage, quality and availability of data on education through improvements to the E-School Database</i>	• Better data for education policymaking and for decision-making by parents, students, teachers, and administrators.

76. The various policy options face trade-offs in terms of their expected impact and the risks associated with carrying them out. The latter is a broad term as it encompasses risks linked to the political economy of these undertakings, the expected financial costs, and the technical and logistical knowledge and capacity to carry out such changes. Not surprisingly, a positive correlation exists between the degree of risk and the degree of likely impact.

77. The rest of this chapter discusses the expected impact and possible risks for each of the four policy areas. An assessment of the financial costs for each of the suggested options would help sorting through the trade-offs among options, however, this is beyond the scope of the paper. The discussion focuses instead on “orders of magnitude” for the complexity of the task at hand, so that the Government of Turkey may have a better grasp at what the main challenges and constraints are vis-à-vis potential expected benefits.

Pre-Primary Education

78. The three pre-primary initiatives go hand in hand and are best implemented in a coordinated way. This would encourage Turkey to have a system that is aligned with international standards of quality as well as greater coverage and higher equity in access.

79. Modifying the next stages of MoNE’s roll-out of the expansion of pre-primary education to focus next on the provinces with the lowest pre-primary enrollment rates and to provide everyone with a year of kindergarten would increase the immediate impact by getting students in the neediest areas into kindergarten sooner. Evidence shows clearly that the benefits of earlier education are largest for those most in need. The short-term risks of successful implementation could increase a bit due to the higher costs of expansion in these areas, including possible construction. At the same time, these costs will have to be faced sometime in the next few years if the goal of universal access to kindergarten is to be achieved by 2014/15 and it is better to focus on the needs and required planning sooner rather than later. MoNE does not seem to have a fully-costed plan for the expansion needed to meet its stated goals; without such a plan the likelihood of successful achievement of MoNE’s ambitious goals in a short period of time is low.

80. Developing a quality assurance framework for public and private provision of early childhood education is a necessary step to ensuring high-quality education choices, especially as a wide variety of pre-primary options including through centers, schools and kindergartens will be needed to meet Turkey’s goals. This expansion of pre-school, which will require a significant degree of cooperation between the public and the private sector for provision and financing, can be carried out much more effectively if a quality assurance framework is in place. Thus the impact of a good quality framework is high and should be in place before or at the same time that a major expansion occurs rather than later. The costs of this option are moderate relative to other pre-primary options but the cost of not instituting a framework is high if poor-quality providers enter the system. It is harder to implement a quality assurance framework after the fact when poor-quality providers are already operating.

81. Expanding information campaigns about the importance of early childhood education is likely to have positive impacts, especially if focused on those areas where the needs are the greatest. The risks are also relatively low if the campaigns are carefully designed and carried out, although increases in demand for pre-primary education without concomitant increases in the supply of kindergarten spaces and affordable preschool options could present problems.

Teachers

82. The policy options to improve teacher quality could have a high impact on student outcomes but are also highly risky, some options more than others. If well-designed and implemented, new teacher policies would help to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The risks of the options are high, however, because the changes would challenge many aspects of the status quo and are likely to be costly given the large and growing number of teachers in Turkey. Some changes may stir up significant controversy not just within the sector, but for the society as a whole. At the same time, given the central role of teachers, the costs and risks of continuing as is are high.

83. Supporting and holding accountable new teachers in the first few years of teaching could have a significant impact on quality as the first few years of teaching—teacher selection, induction, and retention of good teachers—are so key to the long-run success of teachers. This approach requires much more attention and support for new teachers than is currently the case and would therefore increase the costs of bringing in new teachers. The pressure in an expanding education system for many new teachers each year makes it harder to implement longer and more intensive processes before teachers are teaching independently in the classroom. The necessary steps may well be short-changed to meet the needs of the moment thus increasing the risks associated with this option. Quality is often sacrificed when pressure for quantity is intense, as is the case in Turkey.

84. Creating new incentives—monetary and non-monetary—to attract and retain high-quality teachers could have a major impact on student learning through a better-paid and more highly motivated teaching staff. The changes may be risky, however, as they may generate significant controversy, especially for monetary rewards, including teacher pay where views on the adequacy of teacher salaries vary. Performance-based pay or bonuses frequently raise concerns among teachers and others about how to measure and reward performance in a fair and transparent way. The non-monetary incentives, such as new roles and responsibilities for teachers that reward their expertise without taking them out of the classroom or new deployment schemes to place the best teachers in the most disadvantaged areas, are likely to be less controversial and less expensive but may not have as large an impact on the teaching profession as a whole. A further issue for potential conflict is the extent to which these revisions to the teachers' compensation package can be achieved, at least initially, within a fiscally neutral environment in the education sector's envelope.

85. Improving teacher training, aligning in-service with pre-service training, and establishing school-based teacher training strategies would have a large impact if well-designed and implemented but the risks are also high. This option would require a fundamental rethinking of teacher preparation in Turkey, not an easy change to make in any country for political economy reasons as well as financial

reasons. Coordination between MoNE and YÖK on in-service and pre-service teacher training and the required harmonization of policies could take quite a bit of time as they require many changes in the status quo. Establishing new school-based teacher training strategies like the creation of cluster leaders or peer-to-peer feedback networks, although challenging in terms of setting a different mindset for the system as a whole, might not be as difficult to implement and could reduce costs of training, especially over time as it occurs at the school level rather than at a teacher training institute.

Financing

86. To improve the efficiency and equity of education expenditures in Turkey and thereby support better educational outcomes requires changes in the financing system. These changes are likely to have a very positive impact but they are also risky if they change the status quo and redistribute resources, with winners and losers.

87. Introducing a new system for financing public education that uses formula funding arrangements based on capitation principles is of moderate impact and risk. Although there may be challenges associated with the creation of the formula itself, many countries throughout the region and world have implemented such systems. The benefit from such a change comes from more appropriately allocated resources per student and resources per student that adequately adjust for factors that affect the cost of education. The categorization as moderate risk rather than low risk comes from uncertainty about the degree to which accompanying measures of school autonomy, school-based management, and capacity building would be well-designed and implemented and the extent to which there is a significant degree of redistribution of resources within the education sector envelope.

88. Increasing targeting of public resources towards the groups with the greatest needs and the highest returns to education would have a positive impact on educational opportunities across the country. There are a series of trade-offs, however, the most important being the determination of the groups and the size of these special programs. If the overall level

of funding is fixed, increases for one group or one level of education comes at the expense of others, making this a somewhat risky area for political economy reasons, as discussed in previous option.

89. Overhauling the current system of secondary and tertiary education entrance exams is very much needed in order to reduce the regressive impact of private spending by households and thereby improve the distribution of educational opportunities across population groups and across the country. It is highly sensitive area, however, and thus fraught with risk. Initiating reforms in this area is essential for improving the equality of opportunity for education in the country, however, moving away from a 50-year-old selection system might encounter lots of resistance across a wide range of stakeholders (high-quality schools, students from higher socio-economic background, private tutoring centers) thereby jeopardizing any (potentially high) impact derived from implementing these measures.

Information

90. The three information options are relatively low risk from a technical point of view but to be effective they require a culture change in Turkey to collect, use, disseminate and discuss data. Recent information initiatives suggest an interest in Turkey to move towards better data and more use of such data to improve the education system. If a culture change occurs, the possible impact of the information options is high. This requires a coordinated conversation and consultation on the data, analysis and findings, and a willingness to discuss problems candidly.

91. Encouraging public discussion on education through the production of an annual report on the state of basic education in Turkey is relatively low risk, if appropriate technical and financial resources are devoted to ensuring the quality of the data are good. If Government pays careful attention to using, disseminating and discussing the findings on the state of education, the impact would be magnified through the design and adoption of needed policy changes in the Turkish education system. In addition, an annual report can help policy makers and the public to monitor the system performance and evaluate efforts to improve quality, making adjustments as needed.

92. Making information on individual schools, including inputs and outcomes, widely available to the public through the creation of school report cards could have a large effect on the quality of basic education through increased pressure from stakeholders (parents, students and educational authorities). However, teachers and principals may resist the publication of such information, especially if their school does not look good, increasing the potential opposition to such an initiative. The analysis of school-level data needs to examine the resources at the school as well as the socio-economic status of the school. As a result of these factors, this option is categorized as moderate rather than low risk.

93. Improving the coverage, quality and availability of data on basic education through improvements to the E-School Database is a prerequisite for other policy options such as the annual report on the state of education, school report cards, and implementation of a new financing approach. Such improvements would also help to measure progress in achieving goals, such as pre-primary participation across regions and provinces, and to evaluate reform efforts and make adjustments as needed. Thus the long-term benefit of high-quality comprehensive data is high through its potential impact on other policy options but the cost and risks of collecting the data are relatively low. While the risks are low, it is important that an EMIS system, including the e-school database, be developed carefully in terms of both data quality and data usage. As the World Bank's recent use and analysis of certain parts of the e-school database indicate, the reality of the database does not yet match its promise or potential.

Final remarks

94. Turkey faces significant challenges in improving the quality and equity of basic education in the near future, but reforms in pre-primary education, teachers, financing arrangements, teachers, and the provision and use of information are key to jumpstart this process. Bold reforms in these areas will be needed if Turkey wants to enhance significantly the set of skills with which the average student leaves the education system and if the country intends to reduce the existing inequality across

provinces, districts, schools and students. The current configuration of the 2010 system appears to endanger the growth and competitiveness prospects of the country as well as its social cohesion. Unfortunately, with the exception of a few policy options that entail low levels of overall risk, most of the options spelt out in this document will have moderate or high levels of associated risks. The pay-offs for undertaking such initiatives

are expected, however, to have a moderate-to-high impact on the educational system and can signal that Turkey is capable of implementing such groundbreaking reforms like it did in the past (e.g. with the 1997 Educational Reform that added three years of education to compulsory primary education). It will be challenging, but it will be worth it. And the costs of simply continuing current policies without any change are high.