

The Policy Note examines in detail four areas—early childhood education, teachers, education financing, and information—and offers policy options for meeting these challenges (See Table 1).

- **Early childhood education:** Early childhood development provides significant long-term benefits for future learning and helps to ensure that students start school with the endowments needed for successful learning. The government has recognized the need for more pre-primary education as coverage is low and unequal in Turkey.
- **Teachers:** High quality teachers are the most important factor in helping improve students' learning outcomes and are therefore the backbone of the educational system. The quality of teaching in Turkey is low by international standards, which is exacerbated by increasing demands for teachers due to a largely young population and efforts to increase student enrollment across the country.
- **Financing:** An efficient and equitable system of public and private financing helps support effective education. Turkey faces a rigid system of public financing that does not provide incentives for improved school performance coupled with high private spending that reinforces inequities in access to high quality education.
- **Information:** Effective education systems collect, use and disseminate information for parents, students, teachers, school leaders, communities, policy makers and the public to help improve performance, provide more voice, and introduce accountability. Turkey does not have such a system although the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) is undertaking initiatives to expand the availability and use of information.

Table 1: Summary of Policy Options and Expected Impact on Quality and Equity

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

Improving the Quality and Equity of Basic Education in Turkey

Challenges and Options



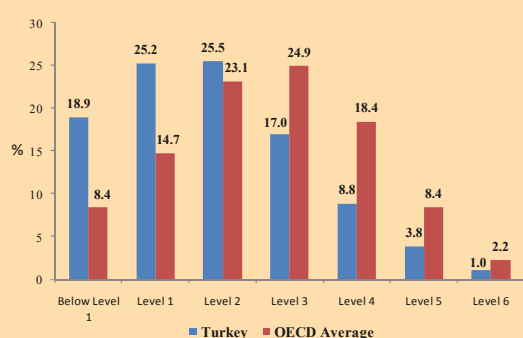
World Bank
Human Development Department
Europe and Central Asia Region



Providing education for all has been a core objective of many governments since the launch of the Millennium Development Goals a decade ago (UNESCO, 2010). Improving educational attainment alone is not enough, however. The quality of the education provided by the system is a necessary component to achieve long-term gains in economic growth. Therefore, equipping children with the high-quality knowledge and skills needed for today's labor market should be the priority.

Education is the biggest area of concern for Turkish people, according to a recent survey of 29 countries in the Europe and Central Asia (ECA) Region. Roughly 5 in 10 Turks believe that education should be the highest priority area for

Figure 1 - Distribution of Math proficiency Levels of 15-year-olds in Turkey and the OECD (PISA, 2009)



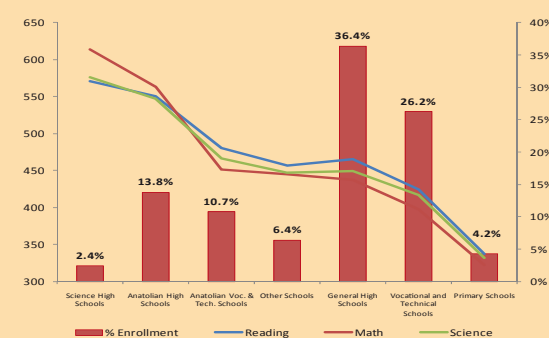
Source: World Bank on the basis of PISA 2009 results

additional government investment – the highest proportion among Europe and Central Asia (ECA) countries after Tajikistan.

Having achieved close to universal participation in primary education, Turkey now sees the need to improve the quality of education. An evaluation of the current status of basic education in Turkey shows that quality is much lower in Turkey than in most OECD countries with significant gaps between low and high performers. An international assessment of learning among 15-year-olds who are still enrolled in school (OECD's PISA 2009) shows that the average 15-year-old in Turkey is 1 school year behind the average OECD counterpart in reading, math and science skills. Roughly half of 15 year-olds in Turkey are at or below the lowest proficiency level compared to about 20 percent for the average OECD country (Figure 1).

Quality is also uneven across different types of schools in Turkey, which leads to lifelong inequities among students depending on where they go to school. As Figure 2 shows, only about 16 percent of the 15-year-olds in Turkey attend schools with average reading, math or science test scores that are comparable to or above the OECD average of 500 points (OECD, 2010a).

Figure 2 - Distribution of PISA 2009 Math scores of 15-year-olds across different types of schools in Turkey



Source: World Bank on the basis of PISA 2009 results.

These differences in performance are associated with many factors, one of the most important being the differences in socio-economic and family background of individuals. Results show that approximately two-thirds of the students in science high schools and one-half of the students in Anatolian high schools belong to the richest 20 percent of the households where at least one 15-year-old lives.

Differences in performance are also closely associated with specific characteristics of the school attended, most notably the degree of academic selectivity of these high-quality schools. As access to these institutions hinges heavily upon successful results in the secondary education entrance exams, some students start taking private tutoring classes at as early as 10 years old. But since access to private tutoring depends on the student's family income, enrollment in the top secondary schools is highly correlated with income and wealth. This, in turn tends to exacerbate the existing level of inequality with which the students enter the education system (Berberoğlu & Kalender, 2005).

