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Improving the Quality and Equity of Basic Education in Turkey

ANKARA, JANUARY 19, 2012-Turkey has significantly expanded access to education in the last decade, but remaining challenges await on two key fronts: quality and equity, says a new World Bank report entitled *Improving the Quality and Equity of Basic Education in Turkey: Challenges and Options*.

Turkey's educational system is currently facing the challenge of increasing its quality to respond to the growth and competitiveness ambitions of the country while reducing inequalities. Expanding quality early childhood education, better teachers, developing a more efficient and equitable financing system, and strengthening the role of information for accountability are key to improving the quality and equity of basic education in Turkey.

The new report provides an analysis and benchmarking of the performance of basic education in Turkey in these four areas, along with international evidence and a discussion of specific policy options. The report provides the following policy options to improve the quality and equity of basic education in Turkey:

- *Expanding quality early childhood education:* Early childhood development provides large 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 to expand pre-primary education and has launched a program to reach universal kindergarten by 2014. Developing this program further in three directions can help improve its reach, effectiveness and efficiency: (i) introducing mechanisms for targeting resources to disadvantaged provinces and children; (ii) introducing a quality assurance system; and (iii) reaching out to others to complement government efforts.
- *Better teachers:* High quality teachers are the most important factor in helping improve students' learning outcomes and are therefore the backbone of the educational system. It is possible to improve the quality of teaching while meeting the increasing demand for teachers in Turkey by focusing on two areas: (i) performance incentives (monetary and non-monetary); and (ii) improving teacher training and the effective translation of training into classroom practice.
- *Developing a more efficient and equitable financing scheme:* An efficient and equitable system of public and private financing helps support effective education. There are a number of policy options to improve the equity and efficiency of education financing in Turkey, including: (i) the introduction of a formula-based system for financing public education through capitation principles; (ii) greater school financial autonomy; (iii) more targeted financing for disadvantaged schools; and (iv) overhauling the current system of secondary education and higher education entrance exams.
- *Strengthening the provision and use of information for accountability:* 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. There are some initiatives that could enhance the role of information in education, including: (i) encouraging public discussion through the publication of an annual publication on the state of basic education; (ii) making information on individual schools widely available to the public through the creation of school report cards; and (iii) strengthening the E-School Database.

Contacts: Tunya Celasin Aydinalp, (+90 312) 459-8300, tcelasin@worldbank.org

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