

HRD policies and vocational training in Turkey

Statements and Comments

Şerif TOKA
Turkish Employment Organisation

Introduction

Learning opportunities should be made available to all citizens on an ongoing basis. In practice, this should mean that all citizens have learning opportunities suitable to their needs and interest during their lifetime. Lifelong learning should provide the individual with basic skills as well as developing his/her present ones.

Lifelong learning includes formal learning, informal learning, courses leading to acquire technical training and skills, vocational skills acquired at work place and learning leading to acquire other skills. Lifelong learning, therefore, can be acquired at schools, at universities, at home, at work or at any other place in society without giving a reference to age, status and education level. In that way, should be viewed as a continuous and planned activity that focus on improving the knowledge, skill and professional success of individuals.

On 30 October 2000, European Union prepared a 'Memorandum on Lifelong Learning' in Brussels, in which six key elements were identified in summarizing lifelong learning strategies that are transparent, tangible and in tune with the Knowledge Age:

- New basic skills for all;
- More investment in human resources;
- Innovation in teaching and learning;
- Valuing learning;
- Rethinking guidance and counselling;
- Bringing learning closer to home.

This memorandum is especially important in the case of Turkey, as Turkey lags far behind the EU member states with regard to the overall education level. Continuous adult education plays a key role in preparing Turkey on the way to the transition to a knowledge-based society. In this regard, Turkey's accession process in the EU has paved the way for various projects and reform activities which aim at developing VET system, adult education and life long learning.

Initial education needs to be strengthened in order to attain the EU level, yet this still remains inadequate. Within this frame, it was clearly stated in the 8th Five-Year Development Plan that National Education System in Turkey will be re-structured in accordance with 'lifelong learning'.

1. Current Situation in Turkey

In Turkey, nearly 10 % of the population is illiterate¹. This percentage corresponds to approximately 7.000.000 people, who are mostly women and living in rural areas. It is quite significant that this group should acquire the necessary literacy skills first, and then, through projects, be provided with basic skills and involved in the labour market. Provision of literacy skills is not only expected to improve the quality of life of these people, but also their employability as job seekers as well as their productivity and awareness in their present occupations.

Shortage of qualified labour force remains to be a problem. This is partly due to the fact that newcomers to the labour market are not offered sufficient guidance in accordance with the needs of the labour market. Also, thousands of people are trained in the fields that are not needed. The content of vocational training courses hardly meets the needs of working life. For this reason, vocational schools in formal education and apprenticeship and skill courses in non-formal education seem to lose their credit among people.

These problems are main sources of Turkey's significant problem of informal economy. It is well known that most of the illiterate and unskilled people are employed and exploited in the informal sector with very low wages and without any social security. This problem seems to continue, as long as literacy and vocational skill courses are not expanded. One of the most effective means of preventing informal economy is the education and awareness rising of the uneducated, unskilled and even illiterate labour force that is the main source of this sector.

Initiatives which aim at improving the human resources of the country via continuous and life long education requires the priority areas to be identified in order to develop effective policies. However, there are significant gaps regarding the necessary statistical data on adult education and lifelong learning in Turkey, despite there are some provided by the MoNE and ISKUR. Statistical data regarding the training courses provided by non-formal and non-governmental organisations are incomplete. Besides, there is no data available for on-the-job trainings received by public and private employees on their occupations or on different subjects. This situation appears as an obstacle in achieving effective policy-making on lifelong learning in the very broad sense.

Developing the human resources of Turkey needs serious initiatives, open discussions and a consensus among public institutions, private sector, labour organisations and civil society organisations on the importance, organisation, systematic, implementation and social benefits of continuous adult education and lifelong learning. Such initiatives still lack in Turkey, yet public and private sectors have started various programmes which will inevitably contribute to this process.

¹ Turkey's Statistical Year Book 2005, For further information, please visit the website of the State Institution of Statistic: www.die.gov.tr

2. Programmes by Public Sector

2.1 Ministry of National Education

In Turkey, non-formal education and training activities are mostly carried out under the Ministry of National Education. This system is mainly governed under Vocational Education Law (Law nr. 3308), Higher Education Law (Law nr. 2547) and Basic Education Law (Law nr. 4306).

MoNE manages these activities both within its structure, and in co-operation with/supporting to other institutions and organizations. Of these activities, some are public and some specifically targets women. As to varying objectives, one may mention both market-oriented education programmes and courses leading to acquire specific skills, and the ones specifically designed for women.

According to MoNE data, in the academic year 2004-2005, about 3.451.515 people have been given training through non-formal education in public and private education centers². Other Technical and Vocational Education, Public Education Centres and Vocational Courses offer education and training services, including apprenticeship education, to a large number of people of every age, including adults. It is safe to say that these education and training institutions are nation-wide.

Despite their limited scope, some other Ministries do also focus on the issue of lifelong learning.

For the strengthening cooperation in VET some projects and protocols are implementing between MoNE and relevant sector and industrial institutions (such as FORD, MAN Türkiye A.Ş., TOYOTOSA, Renault Mais, Mercedes, Middle East Technical University, KOSGEB etc.). The aim of these projects is to provide education and training in the new fields of occupations, and to update the existing departments and branches at public schools. With in this context, MoNE has signed 59 protocols by the end of 2004.

As regards to informal education for life-long learning, MoNE has organised vocational courses with various municipalities and employer organisations (such as TUSIAD; MUSIAD, TESK and so on).

Bearing in mind that international and bilateral projects play a key role in order to promoting quality assurance in VET, the Turkish government has launched international project together with, for example, France, Germany, and Japan in different vocational schools. In general, these international and bilateral projects aim at developing curricula, training technical and vocational teachers home and abroad, renewing machines and equipment, and finding out additional resources outside the regular budget.

Apart from these projects, the Turkish government has launched an extensive cooperation with the European Union within the field of VET. Within this frame, two projects are worth mentioning:

² The Ministry of National Education Research, Planning and Coordination Board. Figures are temporary data of 2004-2005 educational years. For further information, please visit the website of the Ministry of National Education: www.meb.gov.tr

I - PROJECT ON STRENGTHENING THE VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM IN TURKEY (SVET)

SVET is a five-year project resulting from an agreement signed between the European Commission and the Government of Turkey, and has a total budget of € 58.2M. The project aims at strengthening Turkey's VET system rather than imposing an alien structure.

OUTCOMES OF PROJECT

- Setting up the bodies needed for VET reform
- Labour market needs analysis
- Development of occupational standards
- Development of training standards
- National Qualification System
- Revision of existing curricula (based on ISCED 97)
- Development of Life Long Learning concept for Turkey
- Quality assurance system
- Training of school and training centre managers

The final outcome of the project should be a strong VET system supported by a National Qualification System with national and international credibility.

SOCIAL PARTNERS

- DISK – Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey
- HAK-IS – Confederation of Right Trade Unions
- ISKUR – Turkish Employment Agency
- KOSGEB – Small and Medium Scale Industry Development Institution
- MEKSA – Vocational Training and Small Industry Support Foundation
- TESK – Turkish Confederation of Tradesmen and Craftsmen
- TOBB – Turkish Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchange of Turkey
- TURK-IS – Confederation of Trade Unions of Turkey

II - THE PROJECT ON MODERNIZATION OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN TURKEY (MVET)

MVET Project is approximately 18.5 million Euros. The European Commission is financing a total of 14 million Euros as a grant and the contribution of the Ministry of National Education is 4.5 million Euros. The duration of the project is foreseen as 42 months.

Objectives

- To establish transparent national vocational and technical teacher standards, including the required key competencies for teachers
- To develop new curricula in pre-service (5) and in-service (3) VET TT teacher training based on these agreed standards To support the implementation of 20 innovative pilot projects in the regions
- To assist in the development of Turkish government's strategy within a mid-term perspective for the needs of a national VET TT system

MAIN ACTIVITIES OF PROJECT

- Preparing of implementation plan of project
- Modification and reconstruction of present laboratory and workshops
- Training of teachers in Turkey and abroad
- Preparing of text books and training materials
- Project progress meeting each 2 or three months
- Evaluation meeting with representative of industry every year
- Modification of curricula taking their decisions into account
- Introduce the students to enterprises by factory practise
- Revise the curricula again if necessary.

III - RECENT INNOVATIONS AND DEVELOPMENTS ON VOCATIONAL TRAINING IN TURKEY WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE ACTIVITIES BY THE MINISTRY OF NATIONAL EDUCATION**III. 1 - EMPLOYMENT AND MONITORING UNIT AFTER GRADUATION OF VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL SCHOOL**

Instructions for Establishment of Employment and Monitoring Unit in Vocational and Technical Schools and Institutions” has been come into force since August 2002 in order to employ vocational and technical education schools or institutions graduates in their related fields and provide them suitable communication with enterprises.

III. 2 - FORMATION OF VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION REGION (METEB)

It has been determined one **Vocational and Technical Education Region** for each province which has vocational colleges and collaborated secondary level vocational and technical institution in order to educate high qualified manpower which is necessary for industry and country’s economy in accordance with change and development of contemporary science and technology by using teacher/lecturers, workshops, laboratories and other physical facilities of vocational and technical education schools and institutions. In case of requirement and necessity in following years, more than one METEB will be established.

III.3 - ENTRY TO VOCATIONAL COLLEGE FOR SECONDARY VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL SCHOOL GRADUATES

In accordance with Article 45 of the Law no. 2547 amended by article 2 of the Law no. 4702 promulgated in 2001, the formation of Vocational and Technical Education Regions was initiated. Furthermore, the placement of secondary vocational and technical school graduates – if they wish to attend two-year Vocational Collage or Open Education Pre License programs (where the programs implemented are a continuation of the training they have received or its nearest equivalent in their Vocational and Technical Education Region or outside it) without any examinations – has been initialised. In practice, every province is accepted as a Vocational and Technical Education Region.

III.4 - TRANSITION TO GRADUATE PROGRAMS OF UNIVERSITY

Graduates of vocational college may continue graduate programs within the quota determined by universities. Law No. 4702 has brought a provision for the allocation of a quota to allow for the perpendicular transition of post secondary vocational (Vocational College) graduates who had entered these institutions without any examinations. The quota will not be less than 10% of the

number of graduates.

III. 5 - THE MEMBERS OF COUNCIL ARE INCREASED

Vocational Training Council which for the purpose of making decision and stating opinions to the Ministry on the planning, development and evaluation of formal education, of any type and at any level, in which vocational & technical training curricula have been implemented, non-formal and apprenticeship training, vocational & technical training provided in vocational training schools, institutions and enterprises. Represented of other related institutions are included as member of Council.

III. 6 - TO SET UP TRAINING UNIT

Enterprises that will provide skill training for ten and more students hereunder shall set up training units serving this purpose. Master instructors and trainers bearing both mastership proficiency in their fields and work pedagogy education are appointed to those units.

III.7 - THE PERSON WHO DOESN'T HAVE CERTIFICATE RELATED HIS/HER JOB CAN NOT EMPLOY

Persons who have acquired vocational training in their fields are employed in the workplaces. The level and the type of education required for employment and the situation of the persons who have been employed are determined by a regulation to be issued by the Ministry. Owners of the workplaces or employees who have mastership certificates shall hang those certificates in their workplaces.

III.8 - ACCREDITATION

Journeyman, masters and the graduates of general lycees who have taken the supplementary education and succeed in examinations are granted diplomas in the fields they have graduated from. The scope, conditions and the period of supplementary education are to be determined by the Ministry.

III.9 - ESTABLISHMENT OF VOCATIONAL & TECHNICAL TRAINING CENTRES

Vocational & technical training centres shall be set up in the first place in minor locations to be determined by the Ministry. Programmes enabling to obtain secondary education diplomas, certificates and documents in the field of vocational and technical training shall be implemented in these centres.

2.2 İSKUR Programmes

Turkish Employment Organization (İŞKUR) was established by Law No. 4904 and published in the Official Gazette dated 5 July 2003 instead of Employment Brokerage Agency (İİBK) whose mandate and organizational structure were considered inadequate for responding the changed conditions in the labor market. By this Law, the Organization has gained new vision in terms of its administrative structure and functions.

İŞKUR is an Authority that is a related agency of Directorate of Social Security Authority, an affiliate of Ministry of Labour and Social Security, is an autonomous public agency in terms of administration and finance, is subjected to the provisions of private law, having corporate body.

The main responsibilities of İŞKUR are:

- To help job seekers to find job and help employers to find worker;
- To provide job and career counselling services and training programs for improving job search methods through vocational information centres;
- To implement active labor market programs (in addition to usual training and employment services);
- To implement passive labor force programs (such as unemployment insurance and job loss compensation services);
- To regulate private employment agencies.

The administrative structure of İSKUR was also changed deeply with the new law. The governance structure of İŞKUR signals acknowledgement of the multipartite nature of employment policy making. Three new bodies were established, namely General Board, Executive Board and Local Employment Committees, with a view towards engendering dialogue with social partners. Of the 79 members on the General Board of İŞKUR, 46 represents employer organizations, trade unions, institutions of higher education, chambers of commerce and industry, and voluntary organizations. The others are government appointees who represent various agencies directly or indirectly involved with employment policies. It is charged with assisting in developing the country's employment policy and appropriate policy to determined objectives. Executive Board with the responsibility on administration, decision, and authority was established as the highest unity of the organization. Local Employment Committees were set up in every province to provide tripartite consultation at the province level. They contribute to employment policy making by addressing issues such as design of measures that prevent unemployment and increase employment rates, including training activities. The Committees are charged by the Governor of the province appointed by the Government. They include local representatives from the offices of İŞKUR and relevant ministries, employer and employee organizations, board of commerce and industry, and universities.

In Turkey, development of human resources and labour force is predominantly under the responsibility of the Turkish Employment Organisation (İSKUR). As the only employment institution in Turkey, İSKUR performs job placement services for public and private enterprises; implements active employment measures and accredits private employment agencies.

İSKUR, both by itself and in co-operation with public and private institutions and organisations, offers various training activities to unemployed people, women, youngsters, disabled people and ex-convicts. Among these training activities, there are market-oriented courses leading to acquire specific skills, as well as programmes leading people to become an entrepreneur.

Some of educational activities offered to unemployed people have a job-guarantee. Job-guarantee depends on whether the trainee successfully completes the course. These courses are offered in agreement with a private agency; and accordingly, the agency is expected to place at least 60 % of the trainees to suitable jobs. İSKUR data suggests that the number of trainees since 1992 exceeds 100.000 people. Obviously, this is quite a small amount given the unemployment figures in Turkey. İSKUR does also provide specific programmes for youngsters, women and disabled people. Additionally, it carries out some job-creation programmes for the long-term unemployed people.

These programmes have a significantly flexible nature both in the areas applied and regarding the target groups. These programmes date back to 1947. Although with some interruptions, 3241 courses were opened, and 46.041 people received training on various subjects during the period between 1947 and 1970. At times, these courses were also carried out in co-operation with the Ministry of Education.

Following a regulation in 1988 on labour force training, ISKUR started to implement 'active employment programmes' and offer vocational education in line with the ones provided by employment organisations in EU member states and in order to develop and protect employment, and prevent unemployment.

Of these, employment and education project was initiated in 1993. Objective of the project was to offer vocational training to low-skilled unemployed; establish occupational standards as well as examination and documentation system; develop labour market information system; and increase women employment. Since 1993 until 2000, the project offered 3629 job-guaranteed courses at which 68.751 people were trained. On the other hand, 953 self-employment courses were offered to 15.891 trainees. In total, the number of offered courses was 4582 to 84.642 trainees. Since 2000, the number of courses and trainees under the project decreased to a great extent. In 2004, only 77 courses were offered to 1328 people; and in the first six months of 2005, 1108 trainees were registered to 73 courses.

After devastating earthquakes on 17 August and 12 November 1999, the World Bank implemented 140 projects aiming to achieve employment of earthquake victims. Accordingly, 180 earthquake survivors in Bolu, 678 in Düzce, 1138 in Sakarya, 1704 in Kocaeli and 905 in Yalova were benefited from provisional employment. Total number of survivors benefiting from these projects was 4605.

Under the labour adaptability programme, 32 projects were implemented in 1997 reaching to 807 people in total (1 in Nevşehir, 1 in Kocaeli, 1 in Şanlıurfa, 7 in Eskişehir, 9 in Adana, 9 in Erzincan and 4 in Karaman).

Under the project on vocational rehabilitation for disabled people, 496 courses were offered to 6884 people between 1978 and end of June 2005. In 2004, the number of such courses was 20 reaching to 302 people. Until the end of June 2005, 9 courses were offered to 154 people.

Under the active labour force programmes for ex-convicts, a total of 80 courses were offered to 1296 trainees in 2001-June 2005. In relation to this, 23 courses were offered in 2004, and 18 courses were offered in 2005 (until the end of June) to 402 and 286 ex-convicts respectively.

Under the unemployment insurance, vocational training and re-training courses are offered since April 2002 to the unemployed persons who are receiving unemployment benefit. These training courses enable the unemployed people to be trained in accordance with the needs of the labour market. In 2002-2005 (first six months), total 74 courses were offered to 1235 people. Of these, 11 courses were offered in 2004, and 37 courses were offered in 2005 (till the end of June) to 168 and 533 people respectively. Certainly, these courses are really insufficient given the number of people who are receiving unemployment insurance in Turkey. According to ISKUR provisional data, the number of 508.600 people has been entitled to unemployment benefit by the date of 30 September 2005.

In job and vocational guidance centres, 18 job and vocational counselling services are provided in 16 provinces, while 41 job counselling centres are operational in 38 provinces. So far, 23.186 individual interviews were realised through vocational counselling services and 21.367 interviews were realised through job counselling services. 4046 schools are working on this issue, while the number of students reaches to 561.796.

Other than these education and training activities, ISKUR also offers training seminars to enterprises. In 1959-2005 (till the end of June), 1828 seminars were offered to 63.382 people.

Within the framework of the economic support programs that have started between the IMF and the World Banks and Turkey, a new social support program has started with the World Bank as a result of meetings held from January 2000 onwards, with the World Bank, Treasury, ISKUR and The Small and Medium Industry Development Organisation (KOSGEB). The main objective of the Privatisation Social Support Project is to give support to individuals, establishments and regions that have been affected by privatisation and reduce unemployment. In this context, Labour Redeployment services have been provided to individual citizens through local services providers selected by public advertisement. Target group include: workers to be displaced, or already displaced and registered as unemployed due to privatisation of State Owned Enterprises, and other registered unemployed displaced or having difficulty entering the labour market by the overall Economic Reform program. First project was initiated in 2002. The number of 546 projects for 17.488 people was completed and of them 8.647 people (%49.95) was employed by 15 September 2005. This project was prolonged to at the end of 2005.

One of the most important programmes undertaken by ISKUR recently is the Active Labour Market Strategies Programmes Project (ALMS), which is based on an agreement signed by Turkish Government and European Commission and which has started in October 2003. The project is funded by European Commission, with 10 million Euro contribution from Turkish Government, it has a total budget of 50 million Euro. Under the component of Active Labour Market Measure, grant amounts 32 million Euro has been provided for NGO's, universities and local administrations to deliver extensive vocational training, re-training and entrepreneurship courses for target groups who are unemployed young people, women, long-term unemployed, people registered with ISKUR, migrants from rural areas, ex-convicts. The number of person who has participated to these courses is almost 50.000. One of the main activities undertaken under this project is to develop HRD strategy and HRD policies towards EU accession. Within this frame, the EU-ISKUR Project has taken the development of the human resources as an issue of priority and a task force has been established in order to draft a report on strategies and policies for life long learning, which will be taken as a basis of the National HRD Policy.

As a result of these studies ISKUR will have the leading position on Human Resources Development in the country and promote HRD and employment policies at national level.

3. Other Activities

The private sector's and the related professional institutions' interest and contributions to the vocational education increased from the beginning of 1980's. For example, KOSGEB does provide training and development services for its members. Entrepreneurship courses for members inclined to set up their own business are among its widespread activities. The MEKSA Foundation, on the

other hand, is an independent body working closely with public and private national and international organisations to promote the development of vocational and technical education within small and medium sized enterprises. The Foundation has been operational since 1985 and has supported a number of initiatives to improve the delivery and regulation of education in this sector. In addition MEKSA also provides enterprise training in 18 vocational areas in 25 centres across 12 provinces. MEKSA has a tripartite executive board, which is chaired by the MoNE.

Besides, there are widespread training programmes prepared and offered by trade unions to their members. Turkish Confederation of Employer Association (TISK) and its member unions have provided various training courses for their workers on vocational training, skill development, occupational health and safety, work environment, total quality management, industrial relations, etc., as well as in-service training. For example, Turkish Employers Association of Metal Industries (MESS) has successfully carried on training activities at its affiliated enterprises and these enterprises have benefit from vocational training programmes of Training Foundation of MESS (MEV), which was established in 1986 by member unions of MESS.

Large and medium scale enterprises, which constitute 64 % of the employment in Turkey, seem to realise the importance of training quite recently. Some of the large-scale enterprises form training units and provide regular trainings. The most significant problem of these enterprises is the fact that these trainings are given by inadequate and even sometimes incompetent individuals and organisations. On the other hand, small-scale enterprises lack any system in identifying training needs and planning training activities. At these enterprises, the trainings are mostly offered in the form of "learning through on-the-job practice". Training is generally approached as an unaffordable high-cost activity, which therefore leads to employing non-professional and non-specialist trainers for these purposes. Besides, off-the-job training is perceived as a waste of time and manpower; and even when it is provided free of charge, employees are not allowed to receive these trainings. Quality of the employment provided by SMEs should be improved through the philosophy of lifelong learning. Lifelong guidance system should be accompanied to lifelong learning, as this appears inevitable in providing counselling and training services to unemployed and employed people. Lifelong learning should also give incentive to entrepreneurship.

4. Conclusion

The overall strategy of the programmes mentioned above is to make continuous education and life long learning an attractive investment objective for all citizens, especially adults, and enterprises.

In general, the overall strategy to achieve this objective may rest on four pillars, which are:

- reducing the cost of investment in human capital for both adult citizens and enterprises;
- developing a competency based approach to vocational training/education and life long learning;
- developing a modular approach to vocational training/education and life long learning;
- utilizing to the maximum the opportunities offered by ICT technology.

ISKUR should become a nationally recognized leader in promoting HRD, and design, develop, implement, support and actively take part in strategies and policies, which will lead to the

development of the human resources of Turkey. To this end, ISKUR should be a part of or actively support following policies and/or initiatives:

- institutionalisation of continuous skill development programmes and vocational counselling services
- formalising the informal economy and providing, inter alia, basic life skills (literacy and numeracy courses) and skills training on a large scale; and awareness rising for both public and private organisations and local training units on the training needs of the informal sector workers;
- developing strategies to increase the demand of enterprises for higher skill levels;
- standardisation and certification of skill levels;

