



## **FORMAL EDUCATION SYSTEM/VET SYSTEM IN TURKEY**

In a world where rapid changes in all aspects of life are experienced, it is not possible for education systems, which assume the duty to prepare individuals to life, to stay unchanged. In a modern and better off society, individuals need to acquire necessary qualifications for “employability” and to continuously enhance and renew them in order to compete and protect their economical levels in labour market which is extremely dynamic and changing. These continuing needs of individuals’ point out the fact that high quality provision of education and training must be established and accessible by all members of the society regardless of their age, gender, well-being and social status. With this in mind Turkey has been implementing reform and restructuring on its education system including vocational education and training (VET) for a decade in an effort of modernising and adapting the VET system to the socio-economic needs of the country and to comply with the decisions, developments and practices in international context, in particular, in European Union. Turkish VET reform addressed a wide range of areas through an integrated and system oriented approach, observing the principles of lifelong learning approach, which contributed to the development of a modern, flexible and high quality vocational education and training system responsive to the needs of the labour market and well integrated with the primary, general secondary, as well as higher education.

### **Basic Structure of Turkish National Educational System**

The Turkish National Education System is determined by National Education Basic Act No. 1739, consists of two main parts, namely “formal education” and “non-formal education”. The initial stage of education system is the pre-school education level, which is optional. Pre-school education is the level of non – compulsory education for children of ages 36-72 months and is offered in nurseries, kindergartens and pre-school classes in primary schools. The primary education lasts 8 years and encloses age category of 6-14. Within the framework of studies on restructuring the secondary education, the duration of high school education is gradually increased to 4 years beginning from at the 2005 – 2006 academic year. In this context, the secondary education level is a level to enclose ages 14 – 17. As an outcome of the foregoing arrangement realized for secondary education level, the tertiary education level shall theoretically enclose after the age of 18 and lasts 2 years for associate degree level (Vocational tertiary education schools), 4 years for undergraduate level (some disciplines may last longer (5 to 6 years) like medicine, dentistry and veterinary) and minimum 2 years for masters and 3 to 4 years for doctorate.

## **Formal Education**

Formal education is the regular education conducted within a school for individuals in a certain age group and at the same level, under programs developed in accordance with the purpose. Formal education includes pre-primary, primary, secondary and higher education institutions.

## **Non-Formal Education**

Non-formal education is delivered through short courses, public training, apprenticeship training and distance learning in public and private schools which operate under the coordination of Ministry of National Education. In accordance with the general objectives and basic principles of national education, non-formal education covers citizens who have never entered the formal education system or are at any level of it or have left at that level, and which may accompany formal education or be independent of it. The main objectives of non-formal education are to teach citizens to read and write and to provide them with the possibility of continuous education so that they may complete their deficient education, to provide them with the opportunity of education that shall help them in adjusting to scientific, technological, economic, social and cultural developments and to provide an education that serves to protect, develop and promote the values of our national culture.

## **Secondary (General&Vocational) Education**

Secondary education includes all education institutions of a general or vocational and technical character with duration of at least four years following primary education. The objectives of secondary education are to give students a common minimum overall knowledge, to familiarize them with problems of the individual and society and to seek solutions, to ensure that they gain the awareness that shall contribute to the socio-economic and cultural development of the country and to prepare them for both higher education and a profession or for life and employment, in line with their interests and aptitudes. The secondary education is handled in two categories as general secondary education and vocational–technical secondary education. Secondary education schools last minimum 4-year including 9th- and 12th grades and cover 14-17 ages. Some institutions have 5–year duration, including foreign language preparation grade (For instance, Social Sciences High School). Some institutions in secondary education and private secondary education institutions employ foreign language preparation classes in compliance with the objectives of curriculum and the courses of natural sciences group and mathematics can be taught in foreign language. The secondary education institutions are in the scope of post-compulsory education. Both general education and vocational–technical education have institutions with predominant foreign language education named as Anatolian High Schools, Anatolian Vocational High Schools etc. The basic difference of these institutions from others is the increased number of foreign language courses and instruction of some courses in natural sciences in foreign language. Otherwise, these institutions are completely identical with other institutions.

There are two types of secondary education institutions implementing curriculums preparatory for either higher education only or for both professional life and higher education. General and vocational–technical secondary education has abundant institution diversity. There are more than 30 types of institutions. This diversity takes root from the above mentioned Anatolian High School practice and establishment of institutions according to the vocational branches. For example, curriculums related to commerce and tourism is enclosed in separate institution type while industrial curriculums are enclosed in another type of institution. Notwithstanding the diversity of institutions, the 9th grades of entire secondary education institutions employ same (common) general education courses.

### **Vocational and Technical Education**

The vocational and technical education system in Turkey includes two main dimensions: theoretical (school training) and practical (in-company training). Vocational training policies and activities are mostly carried out by the MoNE within the framework of Law No. 3308, which came into force in 1986 and Law No. 4702 of 2001, which brought about changes to the system, establishing new and strong links of co-operation with industry and commerce. The vocational education system includes:

- Vocational and technical high schools providing training in more than 130 occupations and giving access or leading to the qualification of specialized worker and technician;
- Apprenticeship training, which is a combination of mainly practical training provided in enterprises and theoretical training provided in vocational education centres;
- Informal education can be provided primarily through vocational education centres.

Vocational and technical secondary education includes at least 19 different kinds of schools, in addition to vocational education centres, Open Education as well as special private schools. The MoNE is responsible for oversight of all vocational and technical schools whether or not they are under the jurisdiction of the MoNE. Schools affiliated to the MoNE Directorate General for Technical Education are: Anatolian Technical High Schools, Technical High Schools, Anatolian Vocational High Schools, Industrial Vocational High Schools and Multi Programme High Schools, Agricultural Vocational High Schools, Anatolian Meteorological Vocational High School, Anatolian Cadastral Vocational High School, Anatolian Technical High Schools for Girls, Technical High Schools for Girls, Anatolian Vocational High Schools for Girls, Vocational High Schools for Girls, Multi-Programme High Schools, Commercial Vocational High Schools, Anatolian Commercial Vocational High Schools, Anatolian Hotel Management and Tourism Vocational High Schools, Anatolian Mass Communication Vocational Schools, Multi-Programme High Schools and Justice Vocational High School, Imam-Hatip High Schools and Anatolian Imam-Hatip High directed by Religious Education, Intensive Foreign Languages and Open Education, Health Vocational High Schools.

Open Education High Schools render services to students who cannot attend formal education for any reason, who are over the age of formal education, and who wish to be transferred to open education high schools while attending a formal high school. Informal education

provides educational services other than the formal education services in line with the general aims and basic principles of national education to citizens who have never entered or who are at a certain level of the formal education system or who have left formal education. Educational services are provided to every age group with every type and nature in 16 informal education institutions including; Girls' Practical Art Schools, Maturation Institutes, Public Training Centres, Apprenticeship Training Centres, Vocational Training Centres, Adult Technical Training Centres, Adult Tourism and Hotel Training Centers, Tourism Training Centers, Training and Practice Schools, Private Courses, Industrial Art Schools of Practice, Science and Art Centres, Open Primary Education Schools, Open High Schools, Vocational and Technical Open Education Schools.

Vocational and technical education institutions educate the pupils as manpower for business and professional branches in line with the objectives of general secondary education and prepare them for tertiary education. The secondary education institutions offering vocational and technical training enclose compulsory courses in the 9th grade. The pupils are allocated to job families in the 10th grade and occupational branch in the 11th grade and attend to these branches in the 12th grade and graduate. Generally, the branch courses in secondary education institutions offering vocational and technical education comprise of courses earning competencies towards various professions. Furthermore, each branch comprises of various sub-branches. Anatolian Technical High School and technical School are excluded from this generalization. The weekly timetables and curriculums implemented in Anatolian technical high schools and technical high schools are similar with the general high schools as of the common general education courses and branch courses of natural sciences branch. The present branches in vocational and technical education institutions can be categorized as follows:

- Industrial and technical branches: Apparel, textile technologies, olive technology, computer aided industrial modeling, decorative arts, automotive technologies, furniture and decoration, metal technology, machine technology, information technologies, apparel machinery maintenance and repair, electric technologies, electronic technologies, industrial casting, nourishment technology, construction technology, plastic arts and design, plastics technology, etc.
- Branches related to commerce and tourism: office management and secretary, accounting and finance, insurance trade and risk management, computers, marketing, catering services, accommodation services, travel agency, travel, recreational services, tourism, journalism, public relations and promotion, radio, cinema and television, etc.
- Branches related to social services: Skin care and hairdressing, child development and education, organization services, etc.

There are approximately 225 occupational branches in vocational and technical education institutions.

## **Apprenticeship Training and Public Education**

Non-Formal training provision is administered by the General Directorate of Apprenticeship Non-Formal Education. Apprenticeship training is a dual training system in which theoretical training is given in vocational training centres and practical training is in the workplace. Students must be age 14 and at least primary education graduates to participate in apprenticeship training. Apprenticeship training is provided for those who have not been able to continue their education after primary education or who have been left out of formal education for various reasons. The period of apprenticeship training lasts from two to four years depending on the nature of the professions. Theoretical education within apprenticeship programmes consists of 30% general knowledge courses and 70% vocational knowledge courses. Theoretical education takes place at vocational training centres, vocational and technical education centres, or education centres offered by the enterprises for one day a week. Practical training takes place at workplaces in real production environments for five days a week. Those who complete apprenticeships follow a process including examinations and required work experience to get to the foremanship and the mastership qualifications. Only those who have a mastership certificate have the right to open a workplace of their own. These apprentices were trained in 359 vocational and technical training centres.

## **Public Education Center**

Education activities, carried outside of formal education institutions, take place mainly in public training centers throughout the country. These centers offer: Literacy courses, Vocational courses, Socio-cultural courses and activities. Fields of Training in VET are; Accounting and Finance, Agricultural Technology, Aircraft Maintenance, Anaesthesiology and Reanimation, Animal Health Care, Art and Design, Beauty and Hair Care Services, Biomedical Devices, Cartography-Land Surveying, Ceramics and Glass Technology, Chemical Technology, Child Development and Training, Clothing Production Technology, Computer and Information Technology, Construction Technology, Dental Prosthetics, Electrical- Electronic Technology, Emergency Paramedical Services, Environmental Health, Family and Consumer Services, Fire Fighting and Fire Protection, Food and Beverage Services, Food Technology, Footwear and Leather Technology, Graphics and Photography, Handicrafts, Horticulture, Hospitality Travel Services, Industrial Automation Technology, Installation and Air Conditioning, Jewellery, Journalism, Justice, Laboratory Services, Leisure Services, Maritime Engineering, Marketing and Retail, Mechanical Technology, Medical Laboratory, Medical Secretarial Services, Metal Technology, Metallurgical Technology, Meteorology, Motor Vehicles Technology, Musical Instrument Making, Office and Secretarial Work, Orthopaedic Prosthetics and Orthotics, Patient and Gerontological Services Plastic Technology, Printing, Public Relations and Organization Services, Radio and Television, Radiology, Rail Systems Technology, Shipbuilding (Marine Vessels), Textile Technology, Transportation Services, Wood Technology.

## **Reforming Turkish Vocational Education and Training**

Turkish Ministry of National Education, which is the responsible body for administering the overall education system, has been implementing a comprehensive reform process in all aspects of vocational education and training (VET) since 2004. The process is based on new global understanding of VET. It particularly refers to the priorities of the Copenhagen Process of November 2002 along with national decisions set out in development plans, government programs and declarations of the Education Assembly. The overall objectives of VET reform in Turkey are;

- Raising the quality of Turkish VET system to the level of EU and other developed countries
- Improving/updating the provision of VET in line with socio-economic requirements and principles of Lifelong Learning
- Paving way to 12 year compulsory and uninterrupted basic education.

Key elements being addressed during the reform process are as follows;

- Linking VET provision with labour market needs
- Developing occupational standards and respective training standards
- Development of competency based and modular VET curricula and learning outcomes
- Strengthening social partner involvement in VET
- Increasing VET teachers' and managers' quality
- Complying with European Qualifications
- Framework and bringing in lifelong learning concept
- Supporting the establishment of Vocational Qualification Authority
- Raising awareness and ownership on VET and establishing Vocational Information Systems
- Labour market analysis, both quantitative and qualitative

is considered to be of utmost importance for the reform of the VET system in Turkey.