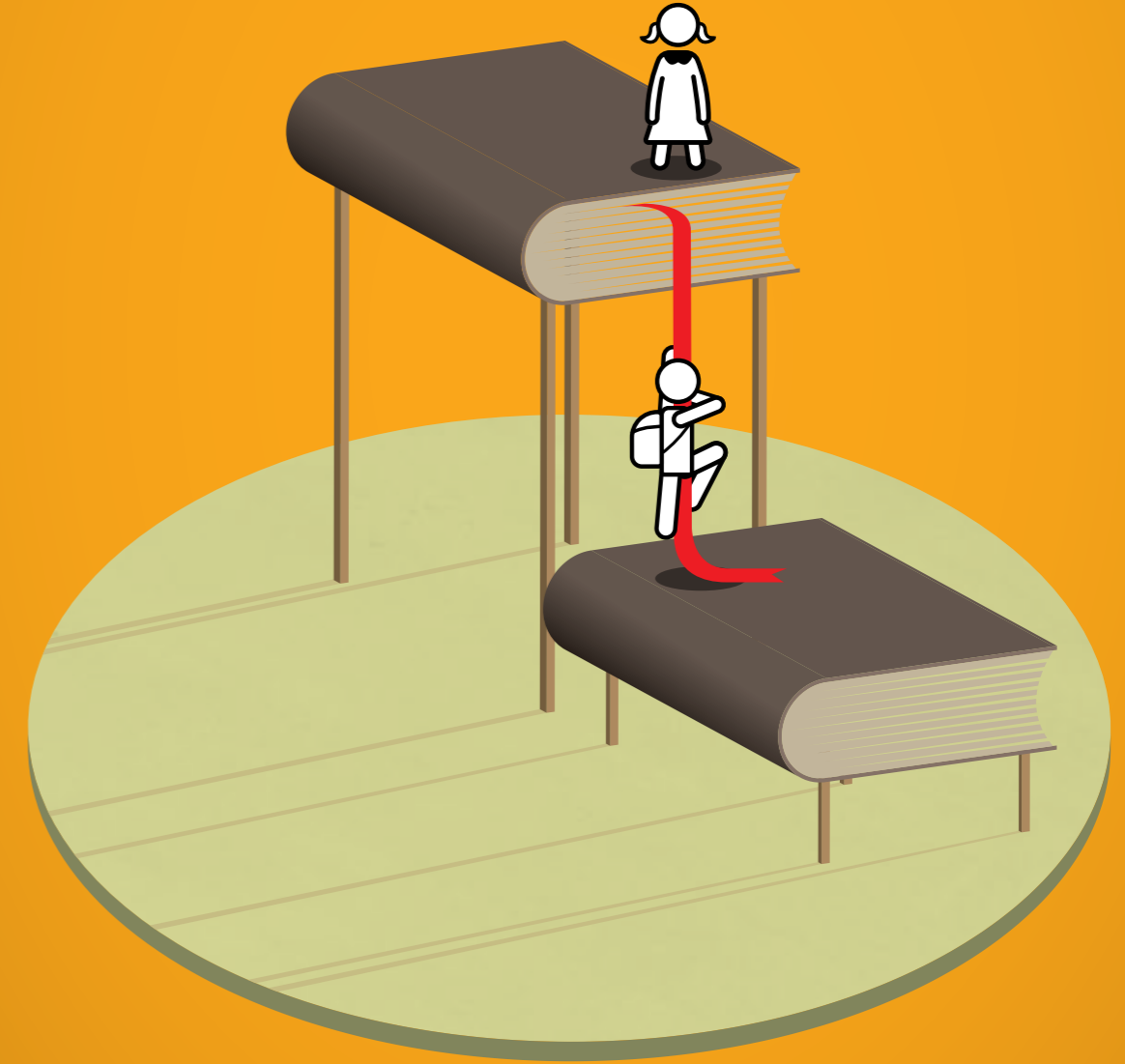


# TRANSITION FROM PRIMARY TO SECONDARY EDUCATION

POLICY ANALYSIS AND  
RECOMMENDATIONS



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**The views expressed in this document are solely those of Education Reform Initiative and shall not be interpreted as the official views of UNICEF Turkey, or the Ministry of National Education.**

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Printed by İmak Ofset

Atatürk Cad. Göl Sok. (İtfaiye karşısı) No: 1

Yenibosna-Bahçelievler / İSTANBUL

T 0212 656 49 97 F 0212 656 29 26

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**April 2015**

# TRANSITION FROM PRIMARY TO SECONDARY EDUCATION

POLICY ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



unicef

**In accordance with the Program Cooperation Agreement, signed by UNICEF Turkey and Education Reform Initiative (ERI) in February 2011, research and policy development activities were initiated, in collaboration with the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) Directorate General of Basic Education.**



In the **'Determinants of student absenteeism and its relation with the economic crisis'** research project, data that has been accumulated in the e-school database since 2007-2008 were econometrically analyzed. The analysis aimed to find out the social and economic determinants of student absenteeism. Another aim of this research was to present recommendations to MoNE on improving data collection and reporting processes for the e-school database.

The research on **'Determinants of transition from primary to secondary education'** aimed to identify the determinants of transition from primary to secondary education in year 2010-2011, by econometrically analyzing the e-school data. Another aim of this research was to develop policy recommendations by interviewing representatives from public institutions and non-governmental organizations in three cities.

The research on **'Financial management of primary education institutions,'** aimed to investigate the financial management systems of primary education institutions by analyzing data on public expenditure, by interviewing key actors in public institutions, and by conducting case studies in 15 schools. Another aim of this research was to develop models of management by examining international examples and by organizing workshops with stakeholders.

Research in these three fields were conducted by expert academies. Their reports were also evaluated by referees. Based on the research findings, three policy reports were drafted. Policy reports were written by ERI experts and were revised according to discussions in meetings with broad participation.

This document is one of the final products of concerted efforts by the MoNE Directorate General of Basic Education, UNICEF Turkey and ERI.

## REPUBLIC OF TURKEY MINISTRY OF NATIONAL EDUCATION

Primary responsibilities of Ministry of National Education include programming, executing, monitoring and auditing education and training services in Turkey; regulating and executing education and training-related services that Turkish citizens will receive abroad; responding to accommodation, nutrition and financial needs of youth in higher education; opening all kinds of formal and non-formal education institutions and authorizing the establishment of educational institutions except for the higher education level; and other duties stated in its law of establishment.



## UNICEF TURKEY

The UNICEF Turkey carries out its activities on the basis of a Country Programme developed and undersigned in line with priorities set together with the Government of Turkey.

The UNICEF does not deliver direct services to children and adolescents in countries like Turkey that have large economies and strong institutions. Instead, it contributes to the development of policies regarding children and to the design and operation of mechanisms for implementing these policies. In this context, the UNICEF shares its international experience, engages in advocacy for change in legislation and systems, facilitates coordination and cooperation and extends technical assistance to its partners in developing replicable child-friendly models for delivering services and monitoring the progress achieved. Gathering and disseminating information for the realization of the rights of children and women, building awareness in related issues, supporting policy discussions and raising funds are all inseparable components of the Country Programme. To attain the targets set in the Country Programme, the UNICEF Turkey works with many governmental organizations and agencies, other international organizations, universities and research institutions and children themselves.

## EDUCATION REFORM INITIATIVE

Education Reform Initiative (ERI) was launched in 2003 with the aim of improving education policy processes and outcomes in Turkey towards the ideal of "Quality Education for All" through research, advocacy and training. Policy recommendations developed by ERI aim at realizing all girls' and boys' right to and rights in education in Turkey and contributing to human, social and economic development of the country. ERI also attempts to serve as an example as to how policy dialogue should be conducted within a contemporary democratic framework by bringing together concerned civil society groups and relevant state agencies to catalyze an innovative collective thought process for education reform policy.

### INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORTERS





# CONTENTS

|  |    |
|--|----|
| EXECUTIVE SUMMARY  | 7  |
| INTRODUCTION   | 11 |
| RETURNS TO EDUCATION AND SECONDARY EDUCATION   | 12 |
| Secondary Education and Transition to Secondary Education around the World                     | 13 |
| International Literature on Transition from Primary to Secondary Education                     | 15 |
| Secondary Education and Transition to Secondary Education in Turkey                            | 17 |
| RESEARCH FINDINGS FORMING THE BASIS OF THE POLICY REPORT                                       | 18 |
| Analysis of Transition from Primary to Secondary Education                                     | 18 |
| Major Findings of the Background Research  | 18 |
| Major Findings of the Field Study  | 23 |
| MAIN OBSTACLES TO TRANSITION FROM PRIMARY TO SECONDARY EDUCATION                               | 24 |
| Structural Limitations to the Education System and Schools                                     | 24 |
| Socioeconomic Circumstances, Education Perception and Expectations<br>from Secondary Education | 27 |
| Poverty  | 28 |
| POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS   | 30 |
| REFERENCES   | 32 |
| APPENDIX: INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED AS PART OF THE FIELD STUDY                                      | 34 |

## MAPS, TABLES AND GRAPHS

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Table 1: Returns to investment in education by education level, regional averages (%)  | 12 |
| Table 2: Number of students who attend private education classes and receive<br>inclusive education                                | 26 |
| Graph 1: Schooling age population ratios in countries where first stage of<br>secondary education is compulsory, for the year 2009 | 14 |
| Graph 2: Gross schooling rates by gender for the second stage of secondary<br>education from 1999 to 2009                          | 15 |
| Graph 3: Turkey's net schooling rates in secondary education by years and<br>gender (%)  | 17 |
| Graph 4: The rate of primary education graduates who proceed with secondary<br>education from 2009 to 2010                         | 19 |
| Map 1: Results of the regression analysis by region  | 22 |

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## ABBREVIATIONS

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|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| <b>e-school</b> | e-school Management Information System                                |
| <b>MoNE</b>     | Ministry of National Education  |
| <b>CEA</b>      | Conditional Education Aid   |
| <b>RPBS</b>     | Regional Primary Boarding Schools                                     |
| <b>SBS</b>      | Level Determination Exam  |
| <b>DGBE</b>     | Ministry of National Education Directorate General of Basic Education |
| <b>ABRS</b>     | Address Based Registration System                                     |
| <b>SPEI</b>     | Standards for Primary Educational Institutions                        |



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Focusing on transition from primary to secondary education, this policy report has been prepared as part of the study titled “The Determinants of Transition from Primary to Secondary Education” conducted under the Programme Cooperation Agreement signed between UNICEF Turkey and Education Reform Initiative (ERI), in collaboration with the Ministry of National Education Directorate General of Basic Education (DGBE).

The report is based on the findings of two researches that attempt to determine the disparities between students who, after completing their primary education, proceed with secondary education and their peers who don't, as well as to identify the main structural obstacles to transition to secondary education in Turkey. The first research refers to the e-school database to present an econometric analysis of various information regarding students in terms of school, family or region in order to reveal the factors affecting primary education graduates' transition to secondary education. The second research examines the notion of primary to secondary transition on the basis of data collected during the interviews held with various stakeholders in Ankara, Istanbul and Şanlıurfa. The report thereby provides a holistic assessment of how and in what way children's overall experience with the education system, their relationship with educational institutions and education stakeholders, as well as perceptions and expectations of the next education level shape the transition decision/tendency.

While studies on individual and social returns of education in Turkey are limited, it is evident that extending the time individuals spend within the education system is crucial for enhancing individual, as well as social welfare. Secondary education has become the focus of policy in access to education, particularly because net primary schooling rate is now over 98 %.

In recent years, there has been a worldwide sharp increase in net secondary schooling rates. Since the 1970s, there has been an annual average increase of 1.4 % in secondary schooling age population and 2.6 % annual average increase in secondary schooling rates. Between the year 1979 and 2009, gross secondary schooling rate rose from 43 % to 68 %, while varying greatly across regions and countries. In 1971, the number of students enrolled in secondary education in Turkey recorded at 1.3 million, whereas this figure reached 6.7 million by 2008. In parallel with these developments, net and gross secondary schooling rates also went up in time to reach 67.37 % and 92.56 % respectively by the academic year 2011-2012. However, a comparison with the education attendance rates of OECD countries reveals that Turkey still lags behind developed countries in this regard. To illustrate: According to 2009 data, while 15-19 year old students living in OECD countries make up 82 % of this age group, this rate records at only 53 % for Turkey.

Ministry of National Education (MoNE) declared the aimed gross secondary schooling rate to be 100 % for the academic year 2012-2013 with the mandate no. 2009/52 issued in 2009. The realization of this aim primarily depends on increasing the number of students transferring from primary to secondary education. Although

making of secondary education compulsory under the legislation commonly known as “4+4+4”<sup>1</sup> can lead one to expect a spike in the number of primary education graduates transferring to secondary education, making a certain level of education mandatory would not necessarily guarantee absolute attendance.

Making a certain level of education mandatory would surely have a positive effect on attendance to that level. However, as it is evident from Turkey’s experience, making of education compulsory does not in itself suffice to achieve full potential of attendance in education. Throughout the world, while four children out of five live in countries where the first stage of secondary education is compulsory, 44 % of these are in countries where lower secondary schooling is below 90 %. As for Turkey, making of primary education compulsory has failed to raise the schooling rate to a 100 %. Furthermore, experience on this level has also revealed that making of participation mandatory has not actually proved a solution to the problem of absenteeism. Consequently, it is still crucial to examine the transition process to secondary education thoroughly, as well as to develop policy interventions based on data and evidence.

According to the e-school database, 1,189,156 students completed the 8<sup>th</sup> grade of primary education by the end of the academic year 2009-2010, and 955,200 of these primary education graduates proceeded with secondary education in the academic year 2010-2011. The rate of students who transferred recorded at 80.3 %, and the rate of those who didn’t at 19.7 %. However, the possibility of transition also differs according to gender. The research that this report is based on indicates that female students’ chance of transition to secondary education is lower compared to male students with similar socioeconomic background. The relationship between gender and transition also varies by region. While being educated in the Aegean region increases the possibility of primary to secondary transition for female students, complete opposite is the case for Eastern Marmara and Central Anatolian regions, where the chance of male students moving on to secondary education is higher compared to Istanbul region. Apart from gender, another factor affecting transition from primary to secondary education is the number of siblings. The higher the number of their siblings, the lower chance primary education graduates will have to proceed with secondary education.

Research findings also indicate that socioeconomic background has relevance to transition in various terms: Students whose mother and/or father are high school or university graduates are more likely to move on to secondary education. As the family income level rises, so does the chance of transition to secondary education; the fact that the mother is employed also raises the chance for female students to transfer to secondary education, yet having no effect on male students’ transition. On the other hand, Conditional Education Aid (CEA) offered in South Eastern, North Eastern and Middle Eastern Anatolian regions does, to some extent, diminish the negative effect socioeconomic disadvantage poses on transition.

Another factor that is at least as significant as the student’s socioeconomic origin in transition to secondary education is academic background. Students with low academic achievement and/or with low attendance level have a lower possibility of transferring to secondary education. The research findings also indicate that socioeconomic

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<sup>1</sup> For detailed information on “4+4+4” see, ERI (2012a).

background is a determinant in the transition, mainly because of its impact on academic background.

Findings regarding school resources reveal the significance of teacher quality in terms of transition. The rates of transition to secondary education are higher in schools where staffed teachers hold a larger share amongst all active teachers. Yet, the relation between teacher quantity and transition is not strong, and judging from Istanbul only, as the number of students per teacher increases, the chance students have for transition to secondary education rapidly drops. Another significant finding regarding the education system suggests that students who have completed their primary education in Regional Primary Boarding Schools (RPBS) have a lower possibility of moving on to secondary education, even if their socioeconomic and academic backgrounds are similar to their peers enrolled elsewhere.

The findings of the field studies conducted in Istanbul, Ankara and Şanlıurfa are, to a great extent, in accord with the findings of the econometric study carried out by means of e-school data. However, in addition to quantitative findings, field study also demonstrated that the quality of guidance and instruction, the availability of dormitories and mobile education, as well as problems regarding inclusive education may also be determinants of transition to secondary education.

The main policy recommendations that have been developed on the basis on these findings are as follows:

Socioeconomic and cultural factors have a significant impact on transition to secondary education and some policy designs that will help mitigate this impact are needed. CEA serves as a tool that facilitates primary to secondary transition in South Eastern, North Eastern and Middle Eastern Anatolia regions. Restructuring CEA amounts with urban/rural divide in mind may have a positive effect on transition from primary to secondary education, especially in urban areas. Moreover, adult trainings are already being offered in support of families. Literacy courses for adults, health literacy trainings, as well as various services offered by Lifelong Learning Centers are also significant in this regard. During field interviews, families expressed that they would be supportive of their children to move on to the next level in education, if such programs were to be made widespread. In this context, comprehensive studies need to be carried out in order to fathom the specifics of the precautions and programs that might have a positive impact on families' values and attitudes regarding education.

Academic background, which affects transition to secondary education just as much as socioeconomic factors, is mostly related to the quality of education. In this regard, efforts towards development of student-focused quality benchmarks and inspection of schools in the light of these benchmarks would be a supportive policy step for transition to secondary education.

Taking into consideration that transition from primary to secondary education is a critical turning point in an individual's life, and that along with the transition come changes in many areas such as the content and methods of education, teachers and learning environments; psychological counseling and guidance services may be said to be the domain that deserves utmost priority with regard to transition. In this context,

the counseling services offered at schools should be restructured as to prepare the student for secondary education, adjustment programs should be developed to enable a smoother transition from one level to the other, and measures for increasing service quality (for instance, enhancing teacher quality) should be taken.

The number of primary and secondary schools in villages and small towns should be increased, and their equipment and capacity should be enhanced. Furthermore, it is necessary to determine whether the number of dormitories intended for secondary education, especially for those students from rural areas, suffices, and then to examine how far the physical equipment of these dorms meet the expectations of students. Considering primary to secondary transition's breakdown by gender and urban-rural divide, it is plausible to expect that an increase in the number of dormitories in rural areas will positively affect transition to secondary education, especially when it comes to female students. Efforts towards upgrading RPBSs have been initiated with the partnership of MoNE and UNICEF, and an impact analysis study has been designed to measure the quality of RPBSs. It is critical for these efforts to be urgently finalized and for studies that focus on acknowledging the relevance of RPBSs in terms of transition to secondary education to be encouraged.

Mobile education is considered to be a useful outreach instrument, particularly by MoNE and Ministry of Family and Social Policies, especially contributing to girls' access to education. Field research findings indicate that improving mobile education services in a way which will alleviate the concerns of families and students, and making it widespread may positively affect transition to secondary education, especially of female students.

Efforts towards improving inclusive primary education, especially qualitative and quantitative enhancement of human resources, may have a positive effect on the student's educational experience, and thus encourage transition to secondary education. Additionally, inclusive education services offered on the secondary level need to be researched and assessed holistically.

# INTRODUCTION

Focusing on transition from primary to secondary education, this policy report has been prepared as part of the study titled “The Determinants of Transition from Primary to Secondary Education” conducted under the Programme Cooperation Agreement signed between UNICEF Turkey and Education Reform Initiative (ERI), in collaboration with the Ministry of National Education Directorate General of Basic Education (DGBE).

The report is based on the findings of two researches that attempt to determine the disparities between students who, after completing their primary education, proceed with secondary education and their peers who don't, as well as to identify the main structural obstacles to transition to secondary education in Turkey. The first research refers to the e-school database to present an econometric analysis of various information regarding students in terms of school, family or region in order to reveal the factors affecting primary education graduates' transition to secondary education. In this research, transition to secondary education is considered to be a decision to transfer from 8<sup>th</sup> grade to 9<sup>th</sup> grade, made during the final year of primary education, either individually, or with the contribution of the family; therefore there is assumed to be a cost vs. benefit calculation behind the decision. Yet, the transition decision might not be solely dependent on cost vs. benefit calculation. It is also evident that children's overall experience with the education system, their relationship with educational institutions and education stakeholders, alongside perceptions and expectations of the next education level may influence the transition decision/tendency. Similarly, the physical capacity of the education system and the quality of education services may also have an effect on this tendency. This is why, a series of interviews were conducted with various stakeholders in Ankara, İstanbul and Şanlıurfa in order to address the notion of transition from primary to secondary education in a wider context.

This policy report will first briefly address the returns to education, secondary education in particular, and scrutinize the subject of attendance in secondary education, both in Turkey and around the world. Later, the findings of the above mentioned quantitative and qualitative researches will be presented, and obstacles to transition to secondary education in Turkey will be discussed on the basis of these. Finally, in the light of the research findings, some policy recommendations for increasing the rate of transition will be provided.

This policy report and the researches it is based on were finalized in March 2012, and the report was presented to relative stakeholders in Ankara on April 4<sup>th</sup> 2012. On the other hand, Law no. 6287 on Primary Education and Regulation Regarding Amendments on Certain Laws came into force on April 11<sup>th</sup> 2012 with the approval of President Abdullah Gül, making secondary education mandatory. Primary to secondary transition, which is the main focus of this policy report, thus became legally compulsory. However, despite this legal amendment, the policy report and the researches it is based on maintain their validity and reliability. It is estimated that nearly 123,000 of the students who completed 8<sup>th</sup> grade in the academic year 2011-2012 did not proceed to enroll in any formal educational institutions in the academic year 2012-2013, when secondary education was compulsory.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> According to MoNE's Formal Education Statistics of 2012-13, the number of students who graduated from 8<sup>th</sup> grade in the academic year 2011-12 is 1,252,147. The number students who enrolled in secondary formal education institutions in the academic year 2012-13, on the other hand, is 1,128,557.

# RETURNS TO EDUCATION AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

The significance of the length of time individuals spend within the education system and the possible individual and social returns of education, in other words, the outcomes of receiving education, is a topic that has been discussed by various disciplines for many years, first and foremost of them being economics. Alongside studies that emphasize the impact of education on the individual's employment status, countries' growth and development, recent studies frequently address education's impact on fields such as health, democratic participation and environmental protection.<sup>3</sup> Returns to education are addressed as direct (individual) or indirect (social), and monetary/economic or nonmonetary outcomes. For instance, while individual's economic productivity is treated as individual and monetary/economic returns to education, improvement in the individual's health is considered as an individual, but nonmonetary return of education. On the other hand, while social and economic returns to education involve economic production; social and nonmonetary returns to education involve education's impact on different society related notions, such as crime rate and immigration.

Education's impact on the individual's income level and society's productivity differs by the country's level of development and education, as well as by gender. According to a study compiling researches on returns to education in various countries, regional breakdown of returns estimated for different stages of education is as follows:

| TABLE 1: RETURNS TO INVESTMENT IN EDUCATION BY EDUCATION LEVEL, REGIONAL AVERAGES (%) |                   |                     |                  |                   |                     |                  |
|---|-------------------|---------------------|------------------|-------------------|---------------------|------------------|
|   | Social            |                     |                  | Individual        |                     |                  |
|   | Primary education | Secondary education | Higher education | Primary education | Secondary education | Higher education |
| Asia (Non-OECD countries)   | 16.2              | 11.1                | 11               | 20                | 15.8                | 18.2             |
| Europe/Middle East/<br>North Africa (Non-OECD countries)                              | 15.6              | 9.7                 | 9.9              | 13.8              | 13.6                | 18.8             |
| Latin America and the Caribbean   | 17.4              | 12.9                | 12.3             | 26.6              | 17                  | 19.5             |
| OECD Countries  | 8.5               | 9.4                 | 8.5              | 13.4              | 11.3                | 11.6             |
| Sub-Saharan Africa  | 25.4              | 18.4                | 11.3             | 37.6              | 24.6                | 27.8             |
| World   | 18.9              | 13.1                | 10.8             | 26.6              | 17                  | 19               |

Source: Psacharopoulos and Patrinos, 2004, p. 114.

According to the same study, in terms of countries' income levels, returns of primary education are on similar levels in low, middle and high income countries, whereas returns of secondary and higher education is significantly higher in low income countries. Lastly, when evaluated by gender, returns of primary education is 12.8 % for women, 20.1 % for men; returns of secondary education is 18.4 % for women, 13.9 % for men, and returns of higher education is 10.8 % for women, and 11.0 % for men.

<sup>3</sup> ERI, 2012b.

## RETURNS TO EDUCATION IN TURKEY

“Tansel’s 2005 study demonstrates that individual returns to education may reach up to 16 %. Another study based on the data of the 2006 Household Workforce Survey estimated individual returns to education as approximately 5 %.[Bakış and co., 2009] According to the most recent study on individual returns to education, extending education by a year increased individual benefit by 11.7 % in 2004, and by 11.8 % in 2008. [Tansel and Daoud, 2011]

(...) Both average returns to education and returns by different stages and types of schools vary by gender. Tansel and Daoud’s study of 2011 reveals the difference in returns to men and women. According to this, the ratio of returns to high school education for men compared to women recorded at 0.79 in 2004, and 0.82 in 2008. As it is evident from these ratios, returns to education prove much higher for women; for instance, in 2008, coefficient of returns to education was 14.4 % for women and 10.3 % for men. In Tansel’s 2010 study, it is concluded that returns to education for women was 2 to 5 points higher compared to men. [In the same study,] it is estimated that returns to education for women declined from 18 % in 1994 to 13 % in 2002, and to 12 % in 2005; as for men, returns to education is estimated to be 13 % in 1994, and 10 % in 2005. While primary education is not determinative of a woman’s income, completing higher levels of education has a significant effect in this regard [Tansel, 1994]. [According to the same source], while secondary education provides the highest rate of returns for women (18 %), university and high school education raise their income by 12 % and 7 % respectively. As for vocational and technical high schools, these rates oscillate between 1 to 2 %. University diploma also increases females’ chance of employment by 50 %.”

Source: ERI, 2012b, p. 149-150.

*While studies on individual and social returns of education in Turkey are limited, it is evident that extending the time individuals, females in particular, spend within the education system is crucial for enhancing individual, as well as social welfare.*

## SECONDARY EDUCATION AND TRANSITION TO SECONDARY EDUCATION AROUND THE WORLD

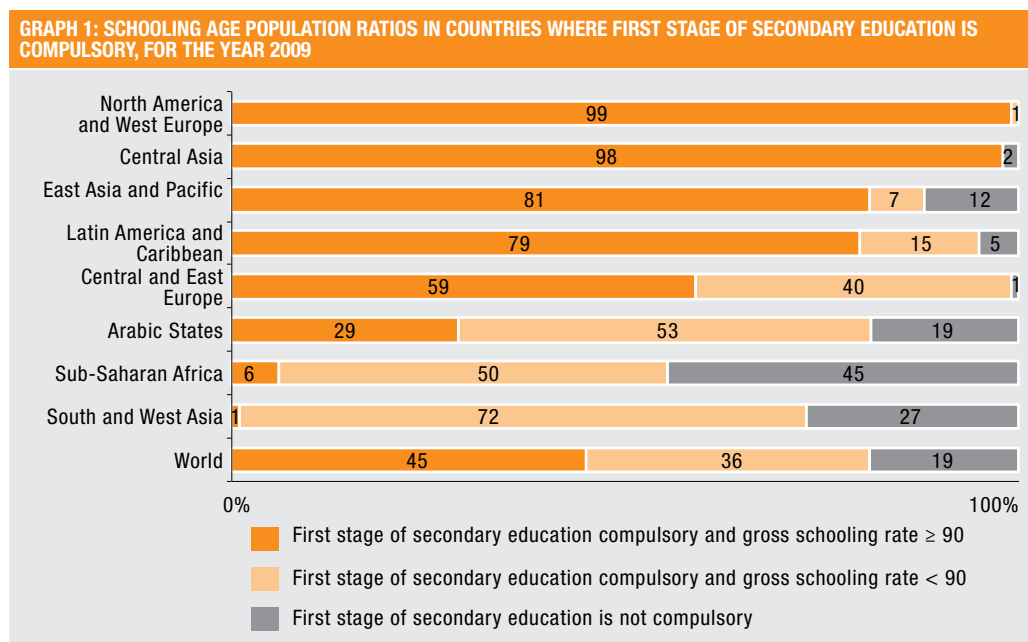
In recent years, there has been a worldwide sharp increase in net secondary schooling rates. Since the 1970s, there has been an annual average increase of 1.4 % in secondary schooling age population and 2.6 % annual average increase in secondary schooling rate. Between the year 1979 and 2009, gross secondary schooling rate rose from 43 % to 68 % while varying greatly across regions and countries.<sup>4</sup> Among Central and Eastern European countries, Turkey is the only one that achieved positive growth in the population of students enrolling in secondary education between the years 1971 and 2008. While the number of students enrolled in secondary education in Turkey recorded at 1.3 million in 1971, this figure reached 6.7 million by 2008.<sup>5</sup> This striking increase in access to secondary education can be associated with positive developments in primary education.

<sup>4</sup> Here, the first and the second stages of secondary education are evaluated in the same category. This is because data before 1990 does not reflect the upper/lower distinction in secondary education.

<sup>5</sup> UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2011.

The fact that net schooling rates have reached a satisfactory level in some countries, or that individuals' expectations regarding primary education have been met made secondary education the focus of policy, and as a result, the first level of secondary education has been made compulsory. Today, 80 % or more of schooling age population in five regions (Central and Eastern Europe, Central and Eastern Asia, the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, North America and Western Europe) live in countries where the first stage of secondary education is compulsory.

*Making a certain level of education mandatory would surely have a positive effect on attendance to that level. However, as it is clear from Turkey's experience, making of education compulsory does not in itself suffice to achieve full potential of attendance in education. Throughout the world, while four children out of five live in countries where the first stage of secondary education is compulsory, 44 % of these are in countries where lower secondary schooling is below 90 %<sup>6</sup>*

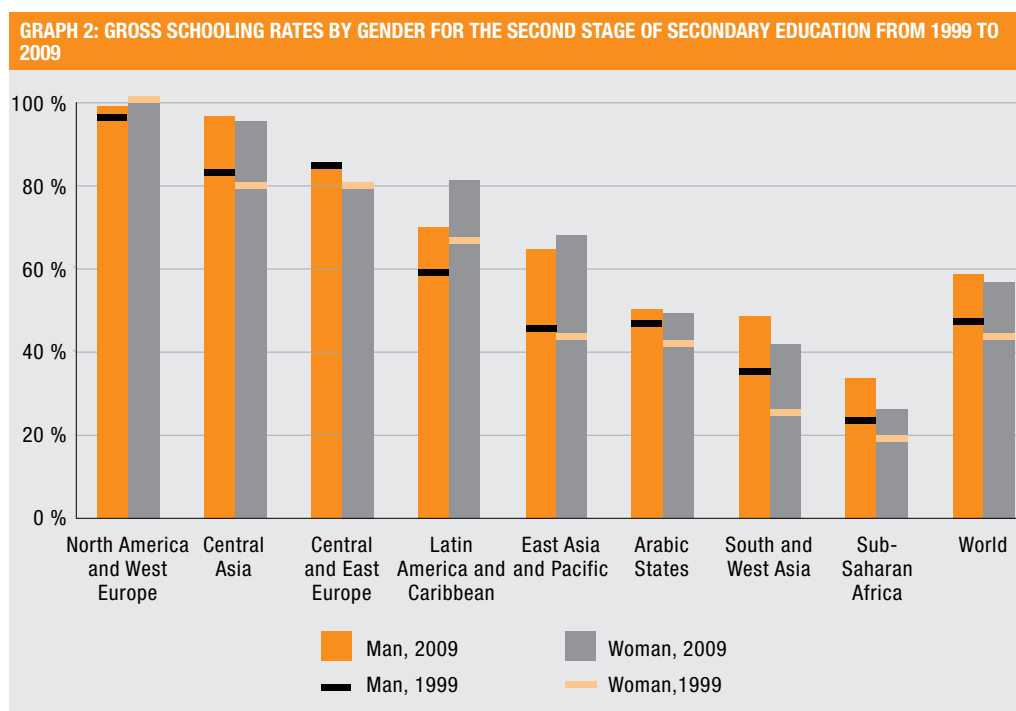


Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2011, p.22.

Upper secondary education is in fewer countries' scope of compulsory education. Schooling rate for the second stage of secondary education was 45 % in 1999, going up to 56 % in 2009. According to 2009 data, with 27 %, Sub-Saharan Africa has the lowest gross schooling rate.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid





Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2011, p. 27.

Achieving a higher schooling rate in secondary education can be possible by encouraging individuals to move on from primary to secondary education. The rate of transition from primary to lower secondary education is over 95 % in most of the countries in Central and Eastern Europe, Central Asia, North America and Western Europe. It is seen that Arabian countries, as well as Latin American and Caribbean countries similarly have high transition rates. Divergence between countries becomes apparent in Eastern Asia and South and Western Asia, and becomes intense in Sub-Saharan Africa. For instance, whereas the Seychelles has a transition rate of 98 %, the United Republic of Tanzania has one of 36 %.<sup>7</sup>

Low active transition rate is associated roughly with two factors: Dropouts from school during the final year of primary education, and unavailability of sufficient means of access to secondary education. It should not be disregarded that these factors are also related to the cost of secondary education, as well as the labor market.<sup>8</sup>

## INTERNATIONAL LITERATURE ON TRANSITION FROM PRIMARY TO SECONDARY EDUCATION

Transition from primary to secondary education marks one of the turning points in an individual's life. This is mainly because the individual is initiated into a new structure where social relationships are devised in different terms; the curriculum differs, and additional changes come about if the secondary educational institution is in another city or town.<sup>9</sup> The possibility that the individual has to leave his/her familiar social environment and friends as a result of the transition, and the fact that it coincides with puberty makes primary to secondary transition a decision made through interaction of several factors.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> Ibid

<sup>9</sup> Cited from Gimeno Sacristan (1997), Levinson (2001), Howard and Johnson (2004), Zeedyk and co. (2003) and Pratt and George (2005) by Ames and Rojas, 2010.

International studies that discuss transition to secondary education mostly focus on how it is experienced by individuals. These researches primarily deal with questions including what kind of difficulties the individual goes through during transition from one level of education to another, what kind of mechanisms support, or should support individuals during the adaptation process to their new environments, how the student's well-being relate to transition, and how factors as socioeconomic status, ethnic origin and gender affect the experience of transition. For instance, a study on primary to secondary transition in Peru was carried out with the attendance of twenty five 11-13 year olds, using multi research methods, in order to understand how students experience the notion of transition. It was observed that all of the students who participated in the research associate transition with change. The research emphasizes the significance of institutional support that will ease primary to secondary transition, and asserts that such support will enable students to have a smoother and higher quality transition experience, with less difficulty adapting to school and a higher chance of completing secondary education.<sup>10</sup>

Another study conducted in the UK with 500 students and their families, using multi research methods, and focusing on the circumstances that enable a successful primary to secondary transition, puts forward five fundamental conditions for successful transition. These conditions require that the student (1) makes new friends and boosts his/her self-confidence and self-esteem; (2) accommodates to his new school environment comfortably so that his/her family have no concern about the transition; (3) shows an increased interest in the education offered at school; (4) adapts to the new institution and its conventions; (5) experiences a sense of continuity between primary and secondary education curricula. The research also points out that it will be possible for the student to experience transition to secondary education under the given conditions, only if specific strategies toward primary to secondary transition are planned on levels of schools and local administrations.<sup>11</sup>

Studies in the field of transition from primary to secondary education in the international literature have usually been conducted in countries with high level of attendance to secondary education. These studies focus on the notion of quality transition; emphasizing that a smooth adaptation to secondary education will improve the student's secondary education performance, increase his/her possibility of completing secondary education, and shape the perception of education in a positive way. Still, no study that discusses transition to secondary education in the context of characteristics of students who attempt transition and who don't has yet come about. This is why the researches that provide the basis of this policy report bear an important potential.

***Among the key findings of the researches is the fact that the institutional strategies developed by policymakers in order to ease transition (to make sure that primary and secondary education curricula are not disconnected from each other; to provide transferred students with quality counseling services, etc.) will affect the quality of transition.***

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<sup>10</sup> Ames and Rojas, 2010.

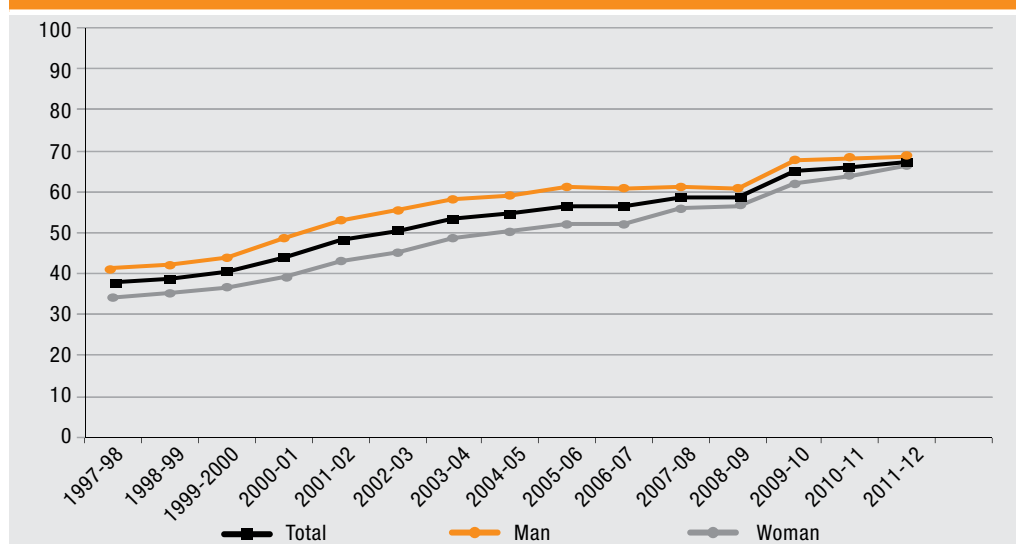
<sup>11</sup> Evangelou et al., 2008.

## SECONDARY EDUCATION AND TRANSITION TO SECONDARY EDUCATION IN TURKEY

In parallel with the developments in the world, net primary schooling increased in Turkey, especially after 1997 when compulsory education was extended to eight years, reaching 98.4 % in the academic year 2010-2011. In parallel with this development in primary education, net schooling rate in secondary education also gradually rose to 67.37 % in the academic year 2011-2012, while gross schooling rate reached 92.56 %.

A comparison with the education attendance rates of OECD countries reveals that Turkey still lags behind developed countries in this regard. To illustrate: According to 2009 data, while 15 -19 year old students living in OECD countries make up 82 % of this age group, this rate records at only 53 % for Turkey.<sup>12</sup> In other words, while eight teenagers out of ten were enrolled in an educational institution throughout OECD in 2009, this figure was just about five for Turkey.

GRAPH 3: TURKEY'S NET SCHOOLING RATES IN SECONDARY EDUCATION BY YEARS AND GENDER (%)



Source: MoNE, n.d.

Ministry of National Education (MoNE) declared the aimed gross secondary schooling rate to be 100 % for the academic year 2012-2013 with the mandate no. 2009/52 issued in 2009. The realization of this aim primarily depends on increasing the number of students transferring from primary to secondary education. Although making of secondary education compulsory under the legislation commonly known as "4+4+4"<sup>13</sup> can lead one to expect a spike in the number of primary education graduates transferring to secondary education, making a certain level of education mandatory would not necessarily guarantee absolute attendance.<sup>14</sup> As a matter of fact, making of primary education compulsory in Turkey has failed to raise the schooling rate to a 100 %. Furthermore, experience on this level has revealed that making of participation mandatory has not actually proved a solution to the problem of absenteeism.<sup>15</sup>

Identifying obstacles to transition, as well as the individual and/or institutional factors that detach the student from education will both provide clues as to which individuals may have difficulty in transition to secondary education, and set the ground for development of some policies to encourage attendance to secondary education. The next chapter presents the findings of researches that examine transition in these respects.

<sup>12</sup> OECD, 2011.

<sup>13</sup> "For detailed information on "4+4+4" see ERI (2012a).

<sup>14</sup> In the academic year 2011-2012, the net schooling rate in secondary education was 67.37 %, and in the academic year 2012-2013 when secondary education became compulsory, it was recorded at 70.06 %. During the same period, gross schooling rate for secondary education went up from 92.56 % to 96.77 %. It should also be kept in mind that disparities between cities and regions constitute a significant problem in terms of schooling in secondary education

<sup>15</sup> ERI, 2015.

# RESEARCH FINDINGS FORMING THE BASIS OF THE POLICY REPORT

## ANALYSIS OF TRANSITION FROM PRIMARY TO SECONDARY EDUCATION

The e-school information system brought into service by MoNE in January 2007 is coordinated with the Address Based Registration System (ABRS), collecting data regarding the academic and socioeconomic status of all students enrolled in primary and secondary education. Providing a basis for this policy report, *Analysis of Transition from Primary to Secondary Education Research Report* was prepared by Duygu Güner and Assist. Prof. Gökçe Uysal, in order to examine the factors determining primary education graduates' transition to secondary education, and it refers to the e-school database for various data regarding students in terms of school, family or region.

For this research, a sample comprising all students who completed 8<sup>th</sup> grade in the academic year 2009-2010 was taken from the e-school database, and then, data revealing these students' socioeconomic and academic status in the academic year 2010-2011, as well as their secondary education enrollment status were examined.<sup>16</sup> There are two strands to the background report: (1) It first presents the descriptive statistics available on all the sampled students who became primary education graduates by the end of the academic year 2009-2010, (2) and then goes on to measure the effect of each factor that is considered to influence transition to secondary education through econometric analyses, and independently from the effects of other factors. While shortcomings of the database (such as lack of some kinds of data for some students) does not affect the descriptive analysis, data concerning subjects of econometric analyses needs to be complete for each student. This is why, the scope of the sample used in econometric analysis was limited to the 674,177 students out of the 1,189,156 who completed 8<sup>th</sup> grade in the academic year 2009-2010 and qualified for transferring to secondary education.

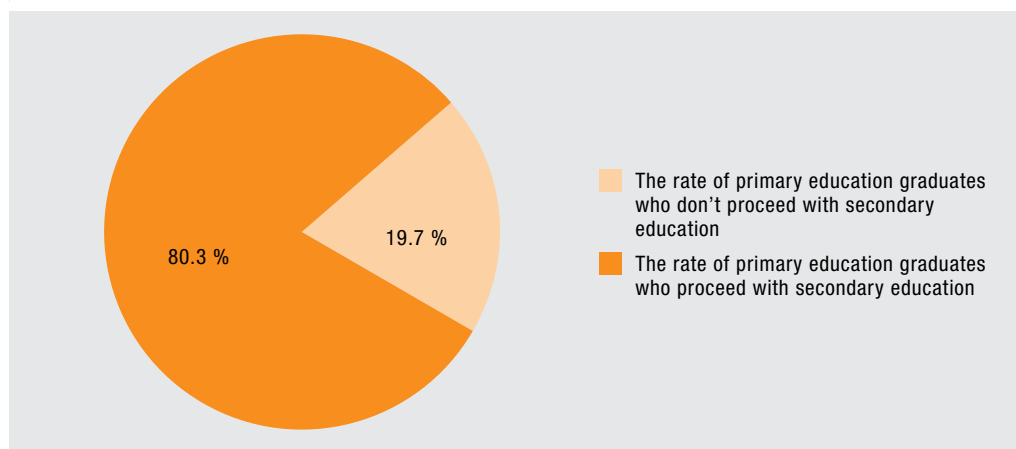
<sup>16</sup> Various stakeholders play a role in the forming of the e-school database. Information to be used in the analysis of the student's socioeconomic status, such as the number of siblings, parents' age, education and employment status are provided by parents or guardian. Data related to student's academic status, such as absence and end of year final grade are provided to the e-school database by teachers and data such as the number of classes in school, the area where the school is situated is provided by school administrators.

## MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE BACKGROUND RESEARCH

According to the e-school database, 1,189,156 students completed the 8<sup>th</sup> grade of primary education by the end of the academic year 2009-2010, and 955,200 of these primary education graduates proceeded with secondary education in the academic year 2010-2011.

**The rate of students who transferred recorded at 80.3 %, and the rate of those who didn't at 19.7 %.**

GRAPH 4: THE RATE OF PRIMARY EDUCATION GRADUATES WHO PROCEED WITH SECONDARY EDUCATION FROM 2009 TO 2010



Source: Güner and Uysal, 2014.

While examining transition from primary to secondary education, the research addresses the variables that may affect the transition in five groups. These variables, as well as the findings that come forth according to different variables are listed below.<sup>17</sup>

## VARIABLES AND FINDINGS REGARDING HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS AND SOCIOECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES

The variables examined in this context include age, gender, number of siblings, mother's age, father's age, mother's education, father's education, mother's employment status, father's employment status, family income, and whether they receive Conditional Education Aid.

Primary education graduates' breakdown by gender indicates that 47.1 % of these students are female, and 52.9 % are male. Regression analysis has also revealed that transition to secondary education varies by gender.

***Female students' possibility of transferring to secondary education is lower than male students with similar socioeconomic background.***<sup>18</sup>

Other than gender, the number of siblings is also a factor affecting transition. The higher the number of siblings, the lower the possibility primary education graduates will have transferring to secondary education.

Students' possibility of transition to secondary education increases with their parents' age. Parents' educational and employment status are among the significant determinants of student's socioeconomic status.

***Students whose mother and/or father are not primary education graduates have a lower possibility of transition to secondary education than those whose parents are.***

On the other hand, students whose mother and/or father are high school, or higher education graduates have a higher possibility of proceeding with secondary education.

<sup>17</sup> All the findings in this chapter are cited from Güner and Uysal (2014).

<sup>18</sup> In the academic year 2010-2011, 643,872 male and 582,601 female students graduated from 8<sup>th</sup> grade. In the academic year 2011-2012, formal secondary educational institutions reported 551,294 male and 487,671 female new enrollments. The estimated transition rates with regard to these statistics are 86 % for males, and 84 % for females.

The possibility of transition to secondary education rises with the family's income level, as well. While female students' possibility of transition to secondary education increases if their mother is employed, this variable does not affect male students' transition. Although father's employment status does not have a statistically significant effect on the whole sample, it does increase the possibility of transition for students in Istanbul.

## **VARIABLES AND FINDINGS REGARDING STUDENT'S ACADEMIC BACKGROUND**

Grade point average (normalized on the basis of classes), Mathematics grade, Science and Technology grade, Turkish grade, entrance to Level Determination Exam (SBS), and the number of days of absence are variables examined in this context.

Student's academic background is a factor just as important as socioeconomic origin in transition to secondary education.

***Students with low academic achievement and/or low level of attendance have a lower possibility of transition to secondary education.***

In other words, students with high grade point average and high grades in Science and Technology, Turkish and Mathematics have a higher chance of transferring to secondary education.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, students with higher levels of attendance have a higher possibility of transition. The reason why these specific variables are particularly emphasized among other different variables that might affect transition to secondary education is because the measurement that these variables yield are relatively more robust and they can be observed objectively for all students. Another finding that may be considered important in terms of academic background is that students who take the SBS exam have an increased possibility of transferring to secondary education.

It has been observed in the analysis that when variables regarding student's socioeconomic circumstances are added onto variables of academic background, the impact of parents' employment status on transition loses its statistical significance.

***This indicates that the student's academic background is more important than parents' employment status in transition to secondary education, designating academic background as an important determinant of transition.***

## **VARIABLES AND FINDINGS REGARDING SCHOOLS AND CLASSES**

Variables considered in this context include whether or not it is a private school, or a minority school, the number of students per teacher, the ratio of staffed teachers to active teachers, school's spatial facilities (such as availability of a science lab and a multipurpose hall), the number of students per class, the rate of students who have taken SBS and the share of female students in class.

It is emphasized in the background report that it is easier for policymakers to make improvements in school and class conditions than in the factors addressed above.

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<sup>19</sup> Class-based normalization was carried out in order to enable a comparison between students by academic background. In other words, the difference between each student's grade and the grade point average of all students in a class was divided by the standard deviation of grades of students in that class.

According to the report, students enrolled in private and minority primary schools have a higher possibility of transition to secondary education than others. Whereas for Regional Primary Boarding Schools (RPBS), the complete opposite is the case: Students who have completed their primary education in Regional Primary Boarding Schools (RPBS) have a lower possibility of moving on to secondary education, even if their socioeconomic and academic backgrounds are similar to their peers enrolled elsewhere.<sup>20</sup>

Other findings concerning the variables related to schools and classes indicate that transition rates to secondary education are higher in schools where staffed teachers have a high share among active teachers; that availability of a science laboratory in a school has a positive effect on transition to secondary education, whereas a multipurpose hall does not have a significant influence on transition; and that the higher the number of female students and students who have taken SBS in class, the higher the probability students in that class will have for proceeding with secondary education.

## REGION AND LOCATION VARIABLES AND FINDINGS

The final section of the report presents regression analysis of region based samples formed with Istanbul as the referential category. Map 1 presents a summary of the analysis conducted by region. The main findings of the analysis are as follows:

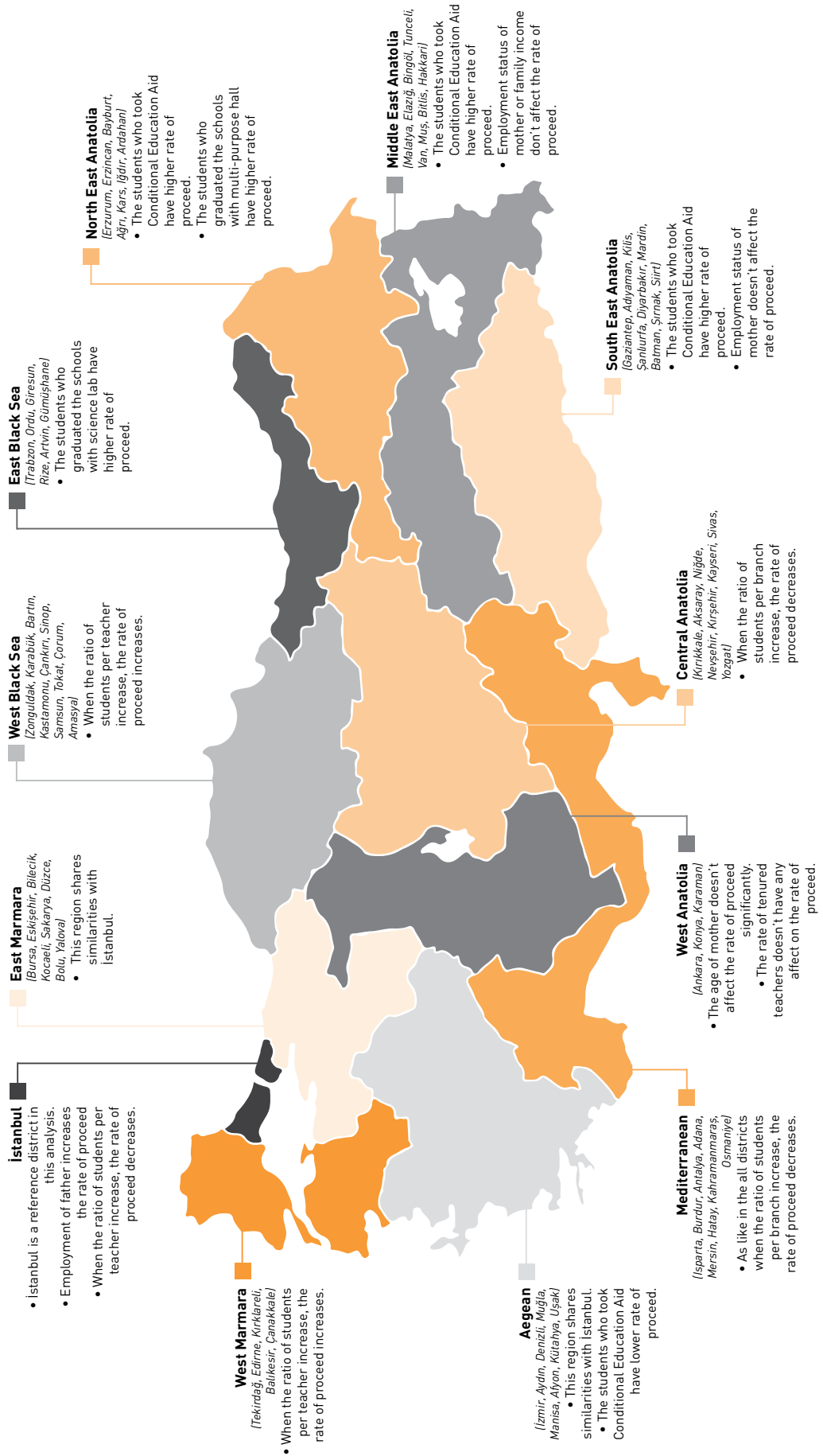
- Transition to secondary education varies by gender in the Aegean, Eastern Marmara and Central Anatolian regions.
- Being educated in the Aegean region increases the possibility of transition to secondary education for female students, but does not affect male students' transition to secondary education.
- The complete opposite is the case for Eastern Marmara and Central Anatolia regions. In these regions, the chance of male students moving on to secondary education is higher compared to Istanbul region, whereas there is no significant difference in terms of female students.
- In Istanbul, as the number of students per teacher increases, students' possibility of transition to secondary education increasingly declines.
- In the entire sample and in Istanbul, the number of students per class has a decreasingly growing effect on transition to secondary education. Whereas in Central Anatolian regions, as the number of students per class increases, the possibility of transition declines.

*Analysis of Transition from Primary to Secondary Education Research Report* considers transition to secondary education a decision to transfer from 8<sup>th</sup> grade to 9<sup>th</sup> grade, made during the final year of primary education, either individually, or with the contribution of the family; therefore assumes there lays a cost vs. benefit calculation behind the decision. In short, the individual or family resources allocated to education are expected to be worth the material and moral gains that graduation from secondary education promises. Yet, as it has often been suggested in international literature, the transition decision might not necessarily be solely dependent on economic reasons. It should be kept in mind that the child's overall experience with the education system, their relationship with educational institutions and education stakeholders alongside

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<sup>20</sup> The fact that transition rates are low among students enrolled in RPBSs is a striking finding. However, additional studies need to be carried out before inferences can be made regarding the reasons for this being so.

MAP 1: RESULTS OF THE REGRESSION ANALYSIS BY REGION





perceptions and expectations of the next education level may also influence the transition decision/tendency.

It is important to remember that the findings listed above do not provide causality, and that the reasons behind the fact that some students don't make an attempt towards transition are beyond the scope of this report. This is why, in order to determine the obstacles to transition and to address transition to secondary education with a more holistic perspective, a qualitative study was carried out by means of interviews with education stakeholders.<sup>21</sup> Policy recommendations for increasing primary to secondary transition rates have been devised in the light of the findings of the background report and the conclusions that came out of these interviews.

The next chapter will present the findings of interviews held with different stakeholders in Ankara, Istanbul and Şanlıurfa in order to fathom the obstacles to transition from primary to secondary education.

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## MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE FIELD STUDY

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The research that is based on the study of data in the e-school database, and the findings of which have been presented in the previous section provides valuable hints for understanding the factors that influence transition to secondary education. Additionally, interviews were conducted with public institutions, semipublic institutions, and non-public institutions in Ankara, Istanbul and Şanlıurfa to lay the groundwork for this policy report. The interviewees were asked to list the main determining characteristics of primary to secondary transition.<sup>22</sup> Public officials' answers regarding the determinants of transition summed up in order of priorities are as follows:

Most commonly mentioned factors include household characteristics, the quality of counseling and guidance, the transition system, family's socioeconomic circumstances, gender, academic achievement, availability of educational aid, scholarships, dormitories and mobile education, regional differences and absenteeism in primary education. Less commonly mentioned factors, on the other hand, were qualifications of administrators and teachers, residential area, absenteeism and dropout possibility in secondary education, type of secondary educational institutions eligible for transition, the level of public resources allocated to education, and the possibility of transition to business life. Finally, among rarely mentioned factors were the primary educational institution that the student is graduated from and the quality of primary education.

The other findings of the interviews will be covered in the next chapter dealing with obstacles to transition to secondary education.

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<sup>21</sup> For a list of institutions interviewed and the interview questions, see. APPENDIX 1

<sup>22</sup> In Istanbul and Şanlıurfa, alongside public institutions, interviews were conducted with semi public institutions and non-public institutions, as well.

# MAIN OBSTACLES TO TRANSITION FROM PRIMARY TO SECONDARY EDUCATION

When the findings of the background report and field study are evaluated together, structural limitations to the education system and schools; families' and children's perception and attitude towards education, secondary education in particular, and finally, poverty come up as main obstacles to transition from primary to secondary education in Turkey. This chapter provides a thorough examination of these three factors that make transition difficult and that are often in interaction with each other, on the basis of the research findings.

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## STRUCTURAL LIMITATIONS TO THE EDUCATION SYSTEM AND SCHOOLS

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Shortage of capacity in the education system and schools to meet individuals' requirements is the primary factor that affects primary to secondary transition negatively. For instance, secondary educational institutions' incapability of meeting quantitative requirements in rural areas; lack of quality in dormitory and boarding education services offered to children living in rural areas in order to enable them to enjoy their right to education fully and mobile education's inadequacy to meet the expectations are problems that have a negative impact on transition to secondary education and individual's educational experience in general.

*Even if the individual has the intention to move on to secondary education, he/she might be excluded from the education system due to lack of secondary educational institutions and mobile education services in his/her residential area. Similarly, problems related to learning environments, such as secondary educational institutions' inadequacy to meet the requirements of those in need of special education, and overcrowded classrooms, are also among the factors that have a negative impact on transition.*

The points that have been raised about these factors in the background report and field studies, and the currently applied practices and policies are presented below in detail.

### LIVING IN RURAL AREAS

One of the striking findings of the background report is that, transition rate to secondary education, which records 88 % in central residential areas, drops down to 58 % in rural areas. The regression analysis conducted in reference to living in central residential areas showed that the possibility of enrollment to secondary education schools is lower for children who are graduates of schools in rural areas. Secondary education schooling rates of 2009-2010 show that enrollment rate in rural areas is 36 % for girls and 43 % for boys.<sup>23</sup> Considering there are only 822 secondary educational institutions on village level throughout Turkey, inadequacy

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<sup>23</sup> ERI, 2011.

of physical capacity may be said to have a negative effect on access to education, and consequently, on transition to secondary education, especially in rural areas.

## **DORMITORIES AND BOARDING EDUCATION**

Article 24 of the code issued in 2008 regulating conditions and implementation of free boarding education and scholarships stipulates that “Primary education students who study on a scholarship and secondary education students enrolled in free boarding schools or on scholarship will maintain these advantages until they complete their secondary education.” Therefore, primary education graduates who haven’t forfeited the right to receive boarding education may be expected to proceed with their secondary education in a boarding school.

(Mülga) Directorate of Secondary Education Scholarships and Dormitories announced during their field interview that the total number of dormitories for secondary education is 2251, as of 2011, and that the number of girls’ dormitory is 599. In 2010, in an effort to meet the dormitory demand, studies were carried out throughout Turkey for defining and assessing the situation; consequently, an action plan was developed. During the interviews, it was stated that this plan’s priority was girls’ dormitories in villages and towns that produce primary education graduates, yet has a low secondary education enrollment rate and that efforts towards solving the quality problem in hostels and boarding schools continue. The open buffet breakfast service introduced to enhance the student’ sense of belonging to the hostels is an example to these efforts.

## **MOBILE EDUCATION**

Mobile primary and secondary education implementations are intended to enable children of eligible age for primary or secondary education, living in residential areas with small or scattered population to receive education services, by providing them with transport to the educational institutions in the central areas, as well as free lunch. Launched in the year 1997 for primary education, this implementation was handed over to Social Aid and Solidarity Promotion Fund in 2003 and has since been managed by provincial and district directorates. According to the data of the academic year 2010-2011, more than 300,000 female students benefitted from mobile primary education implementation. Launched under the leadership of (Mülga) General Directorate of Technical Education for Girls, with the issuing of mandate dated 01/10/2010 regarding Mobile Secondary Education Implementation, this implementation aims to reach both female and male students who have completed their primary education and were identified by city and town directorates of national education as unable to access open admission secondary educational institutions.

During the interviews conducted at (Mülga) General Directorate of Technical Education for Girls and Secondary Education, it was expressed that the need for mobile secondary education arose from the lack of secondary education schools in small residential areas, the difficulty that the families of both female and male students who would like to enroll in the secondary education schools in central areas have finding dormitories or hostels. An official interviewed at General Directorate of Secondary Education stated that girls of eligible age for secondary education tend to refrain from staying at town centers, and this is the reason why they do not wish to proceed with secondary education. It was emphasized during the same interview that it would not be possible to provide mobile education services to villages and districts that require transportation services, if the number of students of eligible age for secondary education is not sufficient.

## PRIVATE EDUCATION AND TRANSITION TO SECONDARY EDUCATION

According to one view offered during the field study about primary to secondary transition for children who need special education, children's expectations from education tend to be low, and this is why they do not proceed with transition. Among the participants of *Research on Problems and Expectations of Handicapped People 2010*, only 25 % claimed to have a positive expectation from education.<sup>24</sup>

| TABLE 2: NUMBER OF STUDENTS WHO ATTEND PRIVATE EDUCATION CLASSES AND RECEIVE INCLUSIVE EDUCATION |           |           |
|--|-----------|-----------|
|  | 2010-2011 | 2011-2012 |
| Private Education Class  | 18,576    | 20,958    |
| Inclusive Primary Education  | 84,637    | 137,893   |
| Inclusive Secondary Education  | 7,775     | 10,860    |
| Total  | 110,988   | 169,711   |

Source: ERI, 2011.

In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the number of students who receive inclusive education.

***When the numbers of students who receive inclusive primary and secondary education are compared, it is seen that the number in secondary education is strikingly lower, and that the increasingly widespread implementations of inclusive education on primary level does not reflect in transition to secondary education.***

This is a significant indicator of the obstacles that children with special requirements encounter during transition to secondary education. In this context, it is important to encourage scientific studies that will reveal the relationship between inclusive education and transition to secondary education. Looking at the gender breakdown of students who receive inclusive education services, it is observed the number of female students is lower than the number of males. The case is similar with special education classes, the reasons of which need to be examined separately. Furthermore, challenges encountered during implementation affects the quality of education, which in turn affects the student's education experience. Large classroom sizes, poor counseling services in schools and challenges encountered in the implementation of individualized education programs are examples to the most common problems on a practical level.<sup>25</sup>

## SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS AND TRANSITION TO SECONDARY EDUCATION

The fact that school environments might detach students from their learning, and that especially overcrowded schools have quite a negative impact on the education experience were stated during the field study interviews held with civil society organizations. There are currently two ways by which preventive measures are applied to enhance the quality of school environments: (1) The ministry departments responsible from each type of educational institution develops measures for improvement and (2) Standards for Primary Educational Institutions (SPEI) are developed and applied specifically for primary education.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Most of the interviewees who shared their opinions for the research were verbally handicapped. Therefore, it would be wrong to assume that this finding reflects all handicapped students' perception and expectations of education.

<sup>25</sup> ERI and Tohum Autism Foundation, 2011.

<sup>26</sup> For detailed information on SPEI, see EMR (2011).

One of the most striking findings of the background report is that RPBS graduates' possibility of proceeding with secondary education is lower than students graduated from other schools. During field interviews, ministry officials touched upon many problems stating that nearly one fifth of RPBSs were built as primary schools with hostels in noncompliance with the existing quality standards, that they are located away from city and town centers, that monitoring service providers at RPBSs is a challenge, and that counseling and dormitory superintendents have difficulty functioning at RPBSs.

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## **SOCIOECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES, EDUCATION PERCEPTION AND EXPECTATIONS FROM SECONDARY EDUCATION**

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Research findings indicate that parents play an important role in primary to secondary transition. Some families encourage transition to secondary education, providing guidance to their children during the process. However, there are also parents who are indifferent towards the notion of transition, as well as those who embrace a gender based approach, making transition difficult, particularly for girls. Yet another factor that affects transition to secondary education is the individual's educational experience until secondary education, and more importantly his/her expectations from secondary education.

### **SOCIOECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES**

The researches carried out in many different parts of the world assume that children's and teenagers' academic achievement, their attendance to school and attitudes towards proceeding to higher levels and their socioeconomic circumstances are interrelated. A research held in 11 European countries found that children and teenagers living in countries where a high rate of parents are higher education graduates stay in the education system longer.<sup>27</sup> A research conducted in Germany based on a population panel that collects detailed information on household characteristics and can provide data from as far back as the 1960s concludes that the children of a family of workers with vocational education have a considerably low possibility of transferring to a general high school; whereas if either of the parents have an academic career, children exhibit a tendency towards enrolling in a general high school, graduating and proceeding to higher education.<sup>28</sup> *Analysis of Transition from Primary to Secondary Education Research Report* associates transition to secondary education with parents' education and employment status, and concludes that as parents' education and income levels go up, so does the children's possibility of proceeding with secondary education. In short, socioeconomic origin does have an effect on the individual's academic achievements, attendance to school and attitude towards transition to higher levels of education. The findings of the field study conducted under this report are also supportive of this conclusion.

The fundamental view that was revealed during the field study interviews is that parents with low level of education do not tend to encourage their children to proceed with their education. Another finding that has come out of the interviews is that families of the high-income group do not encourage their children to proceed with secondary education, if they are "reluctant to study". This makes it plausible to assume that families' values and attitudes regarding education may be related to their children's transition to a higher level, independently of their education and employment status.

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<sup>27</sup> Triventi, 2011.

<sup>28</sup> Dustmann, 2004.

“Religious approaches assumed with a sexist mind-set” have been mentioned in the field research as hampering attitudes preventing girls in particular from proceeding with their education. Background report’s finding that “*female students’ possibility of transition to secondary education is lower than male students with the same socioeconomic background*” makes more sense in this context.

## EDUCATION EXPERIENCE AND EXPECTATIONS FROM SECONDARY EDUCATION

The individual’s primary education experience and expectations regarding the next level of education is another factor that shapes transition to secondary education. An individual who has had a negative experience with primary education might have a damaged perception of the next level, and thus can easily become detached from education altogether. This may present itself as not choosing to proceed with secondary education; and in cases where the transition to secondary education does take place, dropping out of secondary education. The findings of the background report emphasized that students who have low levels of academic achievement and/or attendance during primary education have a low possibility of proceeding to secondary education. Considering that academic performance and attendance are related to education experience, it may be concluded that the effect of the experiences gained at the primary level of education on transition are empirically observed.

***Individuals’ reluctance towards transition to secondary education and the resulting refusal to proceed may arise from the fact that secondary education is not regarded as a process worthy in its own right, during which skills developed in basic education are consolidated, but rather perceived as merely a means for transition to higher education.***

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## POVERTY

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The background report dealt with the effect of various socioeconomic factors on primary to secondary transition and found that the possibility of transition rises with family’s income level. During the field study interviews conducted with MoNE officials in Ankara, main factors listed as obstacles to education access and a challenge for transition to secondary education were that some children come from poor, multi-child families who live in rural areas, or in deprived neighborhoods of cities. Presented below is the Conditional Education Aid (CEA), which is the primary implementation, intended for children with adverse living conditions or socioeconomic disadvantages, and the findings regarding transition to secondary education.<sup>29</sup>

What led the way for the CEA implementation were the conditional cash transfers initiated in South America in the 1990s. The conditional cash transfer programs implemented in Brazil, Mexico, Nicaragua and Colombia vary in the set of conditions they lay and the age groups they aim, yet they all have positive influences in terms of gender equality, enrolment and attendance to school, as well as graduation,

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<sup>29</sup> With the issuing of Decree Law 633, CEA has been integrated into the Ministry of Family and Social Policies, and started to be distributed by the General Directorate of Social Benefits (GDSB). Nearly three million students benefitted from this implementation launched in the academic year 2003-2004. As per the protocol signed between MoNE and GDSB in 2011, students’ attendance data started to be entered in to the e-school system regularly and shared with GDSB in order for outright grants of education aid to be conditioned on attendance.

relationships among families and social relationships.<sup>30</sup> Another study carried out in Mexico, Colombia and Ecuador concluded that CEA's effect on transition from lower to upper primary education is quite profound.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, passing the class is a condition stipulated for the conditional cash transfers implemented in Cambodia for girls only, started under Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction Girls Scholarship Program, and this program has been observed to increase the rates of transition to upper primary education, and to yield particularly good results in terms of enrollment and attendance for girls from poor families.<sup>32</sup> CEA's positive impact has also been witnessed in Mexico, which exhibits a similar economic development with Turkey. Although no study in either international or national literature has covered CEA's effect on transition from 8<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade in particular, background report does present some hints in this regard.

The regression analysis included in the background research concluded that CEA, assessed together with regional variables, has been effective on transition to secondary education. While it is not possible to understand this effect independently from other socioeconomic characteristics across Turkey, it was found that CEA increases the possibility of transition to secondary education in South Eastern, North Eastern and Middle Eastern Anatolian regions.

Under CEA, the poorest 6 % of the population are provided with a monthly education aid on the condition that they ensure their children's regular attendance to school. The amounts allocated to male students enrolled in primary education is 30 lira a month and 35 lira a month for female students; 50 lira for male students enrolled in secondary education and 55 lira for female students. Considering that purchasing power of households varies between rural and urban residential areas, the fact that this disparity is not being taken into account for CEA grants constitutes a significant deficiency. To illustrate, the purchasing power of an aid grant of 55 lira in Malatya, Bingöl, Elazığ and Tunceli would be much higher than Turkey's average rate, whereas in Istanbul, it would be much lower.<sup>33</sup>

Socioeconomic circumstances' impact on education is not limited to affecting transition behavior from primary to secondary education. It has been emphasized in international literature on socioeconomic origin and transition to secondary education that socioeconomic circumstances and academic achievement are interrelated, and therefore, poor children who proceed with secondary education may have an increased possibility of academic failure.

***Although dropouts or grade repetitions in secondary education are beyond the scope of this study, for primary to secondary transition to be successful, the student needs to, at least, stay within the system. This can only be possible if the mechanisms that might detach the student from the system are identified and programs preventive of this tendency are developed.***

This is why, it is suggested that relevant educational institutions on town/city level and the headquarters develop programs intended for these children.<sup>34</sup> When evaluated in this context, CEA's importance will become clearer.

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<sup>30</sup> Fiszbein and co., 2009.

<sup>31</sup> Schultz, 2004.

<sup>32</sup> Filmer and Schady, 2008.

<sup>33</sup> ERI, 2015.

<sup>34</sup> McGee et al., 2003.

# POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the background research, field interviews, and international literature, a series of policy recommendations have been developed for the aforementioned factors that present a challenge for transition to secondary education.

First of all, the number of primary and secondary schools in villages and small towns should be increased, and their equipment and capacity should be enhanced. Furthermore, it is necessary to determine whether the number of dormitories intended for secondary education, especially for those students from rural areas, suffices, and then to examine how far the physical equipment of these dorms meet the expectations of students. Considering primary to secondary transition's breakdown by gender and urban-rural divide, it is plausible to expect that an increase in the number of dormitories in rural areas will positively affect transition to secondary education, especially when it comes to female students.

Efforts towards upgrading RPBSs have been initiated with the partnership of MoNE and UNICEF and an impact analysis study has been designed to measure the quality of RPBSs. It is critical for these efforts to be urgently finalized and for studies that focus on acknowledging the relevance of RPBSs in terms of transition to secondary education to be encouraged.

Mobile education is considered to be a useful outreach instrument, particularly by MoNE and the Ministry of Family and Social Policies, especially contributing to girls' access to education. While there are no scientific studies that associate transition to secondary education with mobile education, field research findings indicate that improving mobile education services in a way that will alleviate the concerns of families and students, and making it widespread may positively affect transition to secondary education, especially of female students.

Problems concerning inclusive education intensify on implementation level. Efforts towards improving inclusive primary education, especially qualitative and quantitative enhancement of human resources, may have a positive effect on the student's educational experience, and thus encourage transition to secondary education. Additionally, inclusive education services offered on the secondary level need to be researched and assessed holistically.

Development of student focused quality benchmarks and inspection of schools in the light of these benchmarks should be the first and foremost of the efforts towards enhancing school quality.

Taking into consideration that transition to secondary education is a critical turning point in an individual's life and that along with the transition come changes in many areas such as the content and methods of education, teachers and learning environments, services of psychological counseling and guidance may be said to be the domain that deserves utmost priority with regard to transition.

***In this context, the counseling services offered at schools should be restructured as to prepare the student for secondary education, adjustment programs should be developed to enable a smoother transition from one level to the other, and measures for increasing service quality (such as for enhancing teacher quality) should be taken.***



Policies intended to increase the rates of transition from primary to secondary education should aim at improving the socioeconomic circumstances of households, and especially of children living in adverse conditions. It was found that CEA increases the possibility of transition in South Eastern, North Eastern and Middle Eastern Anatolian regions. CEA serves as a tool that facilitates primary to secondary transition in these regions. Restructuring CEA amounts with urban/rural divide in mind may have a positive effect on transition from primary to secondary education, especially in urban areas.

Adult trainings are already being offered in support of families. Literacy courses for adults, health literacy trainings, as well as various services offered by Lifelong Learning Centers are also significant in this regard. During field interviews, families expressed that they would be supportive of their children to move on to the next level in education, if such programs were to be made widespread. In this context, comprehensive studies need to be carried out in order to fathom the specifics of the precautions and programs that might have a positive impact on families' values and attitudes regarding education.

Interviews conducted in Ankara, Istanbul and Şanlıurfa reveal that there are ongoing interventions encouraging transition to secondary education (such as mobile education, construction of dormitories, and enrollment of female students through persuasion of their families) implemented on levels of provincial directorates of national education or governor's office. It should be remembered that despite their local quality, these interventions are programs prioritized and funded by the headquarters. Taking into consideration the divergences between regions, it becomes evident that creating a road map that will appeal to all students, encouraging transition to secondary education is not easy. This is why, it is important that enabling interventions and incentives for local initiatives are developed by the headquarters.

In Europe, North America and Australia, some strategies encouraging transition to secondary education are being put into practice since the 1980s. The first and foremost of these involves organizing visits to the institutions in order to familiarize the students with the secondary education environment and to increase dialogue between secondary education teachers and students.<sup>35</sup> In Turkey, in light of the strategies applied throughout the world, collaborations may be formed among primary and secondary educational institutions, and measures that will ease transition between curricula may be taken.

***Finally, the main source of data for the background report is the e-school database. The initially selected research sample was narrowed down due to unavailability of data on certain indicators in the database. Some improvement in the e-school data collecting process and widespread access to these data would increase the number of conducted researches and thus support data based education policy development processes.***

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<sup>35</sup> Howard and Johnson, 2004; Evangelou et al., 2008.

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# APPENDIX: INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED AS PART OF THE FIELD STUDY

| FIELD STUDY INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED IN ANKARA  |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Dates</b>  | June 23-25 2011; July 14-15 2011   |
| <b>Interviewed institutions</b>   | MoNE Directorate General of Basic Education  |
|   | MoNE Directorate General of Secondary Education  |
|   | MoNE General Directorate of Technical Education for Girls  |
|   | (Mülga) MoNE General Directorate of Technical Education for Boys   |
|   | (Mülga) MoNE Directorate of Project Coordination Centre  |
|   | (Mülga) MoNE Directorate of Secondary Education Scholarships and Dormitories   |
|   | MoNE Directorate General of Special Education, Guidance and Counseling Services  |
|   | (Mülga) MoNE Directorate of Healthcare   |
|   | (Mülga) MoNE Directorate of Education Research and Development   |
|   | MoNE Head Council of Education and Discipline  |
|   | (Mülga) Prime Ministry State Planning Organization (DPT)   |
| (Mülga) Prime Ministry Department Of the Handicapped (ÖZİDA)  |  |
| <b>Interview questions</b>  | What, in your opinion, are the determinants of transition from primary to secondary education?   |
|   | Can you list these determinants in order of importance?  |
|   | Do you have any strategies and/or researches related to these determinants? Is an impact assessment conducted on these?                    |
|   | What kind of interventions do you suggest, or have you applied/are applying in cases where transition rate does not meet the expectations? |
|   | What's your evaluation of transition system to secondary education?  |
| How many of the aims set for transition from primary to secondary education within your strategic planning have been achieved? In cases where they are not achieved, are there any studies/ideas on the reasons of failure? |  |

| FIELD STUDY INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED IN ŞANLIURFA  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Dates</b>   | September 22-23 2011   |
| <b>Interviewed institutions</b>  | Şanlıurfa Provincial Directorate of National Education   |
|  | Şanlıurfa Provincial Special Administration Youth Center   |
|  | GAP Foundation of Education Volunteers   |
|  | TEGV - Urfa Education Park   |
|  | KAMER Foundation   |
|  | Eğitim-Sen (Education Union)– Central Şanlıurfa  |
|  | Educators' Trade Union (Eğitim-Bir-Sen) – Headquarters   |
| <b>Interview questions</b>   | What are the main factors that determine transition from primary to secondary education? Is it possible to categorize these as those caused by the student, by the school, and by the system?  |
|  | Who are considered to be the most disadvantaged in terms of transition? Female students, students who show no academic achievement, or students who come from poor families?   |
|  | What expectations do students and parents have from secondary education?   |
|  | What kinds of differences are observed between different areas of the city and rural/urban centers in terms of transition? Particularly in cases where students have no access to secondary educational institutions, does this have a determinative role in transition?           |
|  | What is 9 <sup>th</sup> graders' perspective on secondary education? Do students at this stage have difficulties?  |
|  | Are there any studies on city level that present families' and students' approaches to secondary educational institutions?   |
|  | What kinds of findings are available on primary education students' experiences between 6 <sup>th</sup> and 8 <sup>th</sup> grade?   |
|  | Are the public resources allocated to primary and secondary education considered sufficient to meet the requirements of the city? Is there ongoing communication and cooperation with other stakeholders in the city in order to multiply the resources and make them sustainable? |
| Which mechanisms are used to increase and encourage transition to secondary education? With these mechanisms in mind, how do the instruments used for vocational and technical secondary education and general secondary education vary? |  |
| Are there any efforts focused on academic and professional guidance and counseling? If there are, how are they evaluated?  |  |

| FIELD STUDY INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED IN ISTANBUL |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Dates</b>                                 | September 27 – October 24 2011  |
| <b>Interviewed institutions</b>              | MoNE Istanbul Provincial Directorate of National Education  |
|  | Beyoğlu Municipality Youth Center   |
|  | Kadıköy Municipality Youth Center   |
|  | Educational Volunteers Foundation of Turkey (TEGV) - Merkez   |
|  | TEGV - Zeyrek Education Unit  |
|  | Teachers Academy Foundation (ÖRAV)  |
|  | Community Volunteers Foundation (TOG)   |
|  | TOG Pembe Ev Youth Center   |
|  | Education and Science Employees Union (Eğitim-Sen)  |
|  | Umut Çocukları (Children of Hope) Foundation  |
| <b>Interview questions</b>                   | What are the main factors that determine transition from primary to secondary education? Is it possible to categorize these as those caused by the student, by the school, and by the system?   |
|  | In what way may Istanbul's "unique circumstances", scale, variety and other characteristics affect primary education graduation rate and transition to secondary education?   |
|  | Who are considered to be the most disadvantaged in terms of transition? Female students, students who show no academic achievement, or students who come from poor families?  |
|  | What expectations do students and parents have from secondary education?  |
|  | What kinds of differences are observed in terms of transition between different locations, districts and residential areas of the city? Particularly in cases where students have no access to secondary educational institutions, does this have a determinative role in transition?       |
|  | What kinds of findings are available on primary education students' experiences between 6 <sup>th</sup> and 8 <sup>th</sup> grade?  |
|  | Are there any disparities between primary educational institutions in terms of students' transition rates, if so, how may these be explained?   |
|  | What is 9 <sup>th</sup> graders' perspective on secondary education? Do students at this stage have difficulties?   |
|  | Have there been cases of dropouts, and what kind of preventive measures are being/can be taken against these? Especially in Istanbul, is it possible for families or living conditions of teenagers of eligible age for secondary education to increase their chance of taking up a career? |
|  | Are there any studies on city level that present families' and students' approaches to secondary educational institutions?  |
|  | Are the public resources allocated to primary and secondary education considered sufficient to meet the requirements of the city? Is there ongoing communication and cooperation with other stakeholders in the city in order to multiply the resources and make them sustainable?          |
|  | Which mechanisms are used to increase and encourage transition to secondary education? With these mechanisms in mind, how do the instruments used for vocational and technical secondary education and general secondary education vary?  |
|  | Are there any efforts focused on academic and professional guidance and counseling? If there are, how are they evaluated?   |