



INTERGENERATIONAL MOBILITY IN EDUCATION How Does Turkey Compare in Equality of Opportunity?

Education is one of the key factors that determine the quality of human resources and thus the competitiveness of a country. The steps that will enhance the access to and quality of education can facilitate economic growth by helping make the best use of human capital.² By the same token, a good education is critical for an individual born to a low-income family to be able to switch to an upper level of income.³ In other words, education can be a major tool of intergenerational social mobility.

The stronger the link between the education level of children and their parents, the weaker the chances are for equality of opportunity in education and intergenerational socioeconomic mobility. Equality of opportunity will ensure that the children of parents with low income and a low level of education will access to quality education as much as others do. Seen in this light, it must be the responsibility of policy-makers in Turkey, an ostensibly social state, to eliminate inequality in access to education as a major social service. This evaluation note examines intergenerational social mobility in Turkey compared with OECD countries on the basis of schooling rates and quality of education.

¹ <http://www.tepav.org.tr/en/ekibimiz/s/1252/Bilgi+Aslankurt>

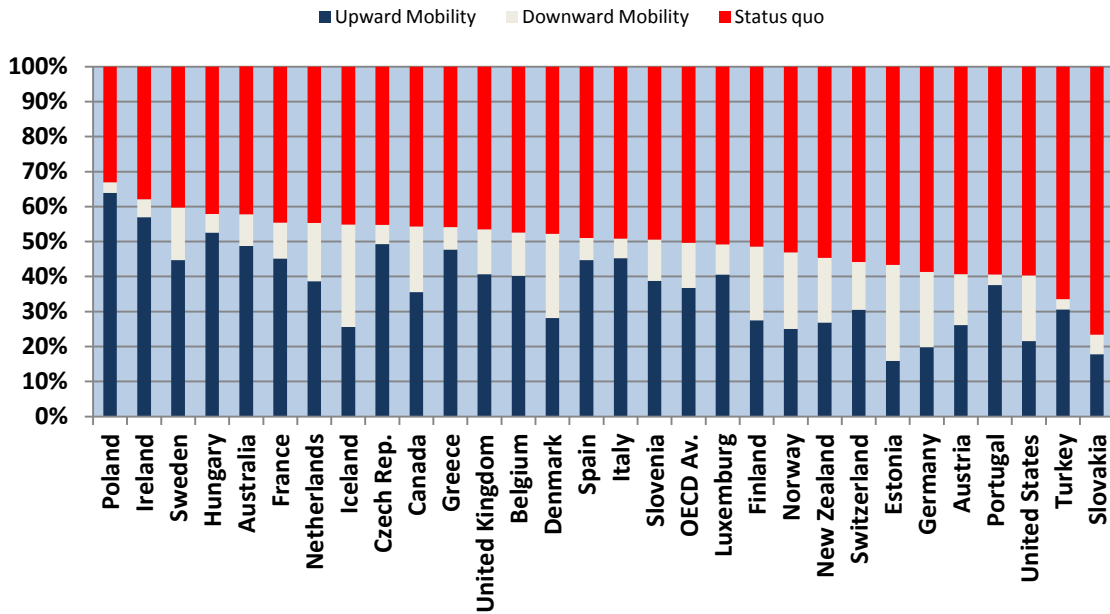
² OECD(2012), Economic Policy Reforms 2012: Going for Growth, OECD Publishing <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/growth-2012-en>

³ According to TURKSTAT's earnings statistics for 2010, the average salary of a university graduate was 66% higher than that of a vocational school graduate, 115% higher than that of a regular high school graduate and 171% higher than that of a secondary school graduate.

Intergenerational Mobility in Terms of Schooling Rates

Data on education level of young adults and their parents reveal that intergenerational mobility in Turkey is quite low. According to the figures from European Labor Force Survey⁴, 50% of the young adults across OECD countries have achieved the same level of education as their parents, while 37% are better off. Figure 1 below identifies three categories for young adults who participated in the survey: *upward mobility* implies a higher level of education than parents; *status quo* the same level; and *downward mobility* indicates that they have a lower level of education. Turkey ranks second among OECD countries with 66% of survey participants having the same educational attainment as their parents. In other words, Turkey has the lowest intergenerational social mobility among OECD countries, except for Slovakia. The picture becomes even grimmer when we consider the fact that Turkey already has the lowest level of educational attainment on average among OECD countries (See Annex 1.)

Figure 1: Intergenerational Mobility in Education across OECD Countries*, 2009



*Educational attainment of 25-34 year-old non-students in compared with their parents. For United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, data from Adult Literacy and Lifeskills Survey was used.

Source: OECD Education at a Glance 2012, European Labor Force Survey 2009, Adult Literacy Survey 2009

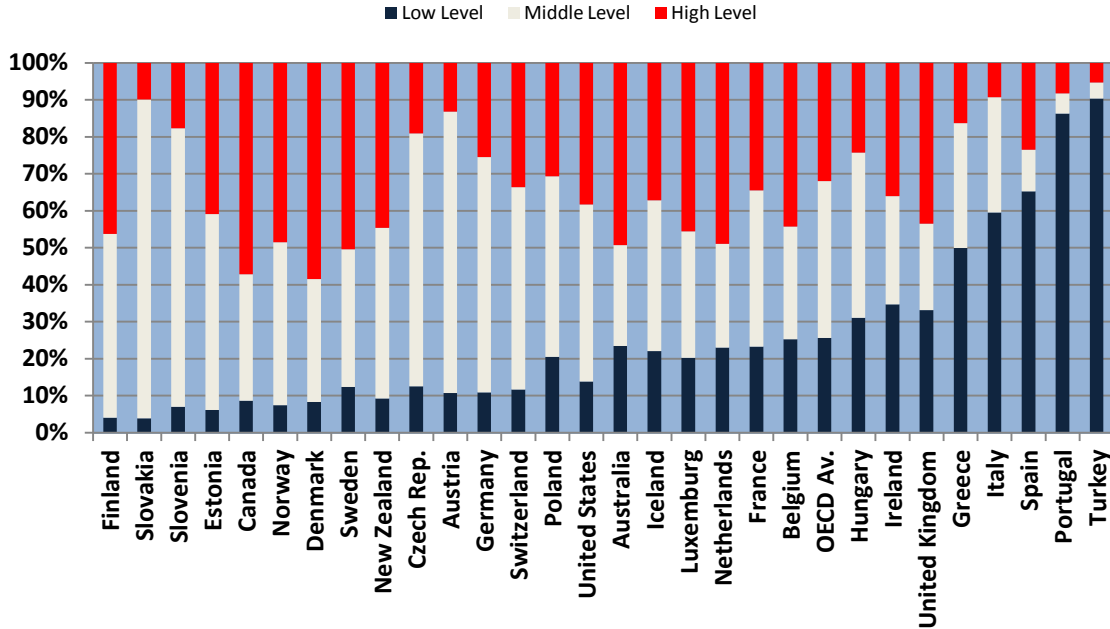
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932662010>

Another alarming issue for Turkey is that in families with no intergenerational improvement in education level, a stark 91% have no high-school graduates (Figure 2). Given that 66% of young adults have the same educational attainment as their parents,

⁴ European Labor Force Survey, conducted annually by Eurostat, covers 1.5 million people across Europe. It involved a separate chapter on intergenerational mobility in education in 2009.

91% of these do not have a high school diploma as of 2009. This implies that children of parents with low education levels are destined to have lower years of schooling as compared to those with higher education levels.

Figure 2: Educational Attainment of Parents in Families with No Intergenerational Mobility in Education*, 2009



Source: European Labor Force Survey 2009, Adult Literacy Survey 2009

* The category low level represents non-student young adults who have not completed secondary education, middle level represents those who have only completed secondary education, and high level represents those who completed tertiary education.

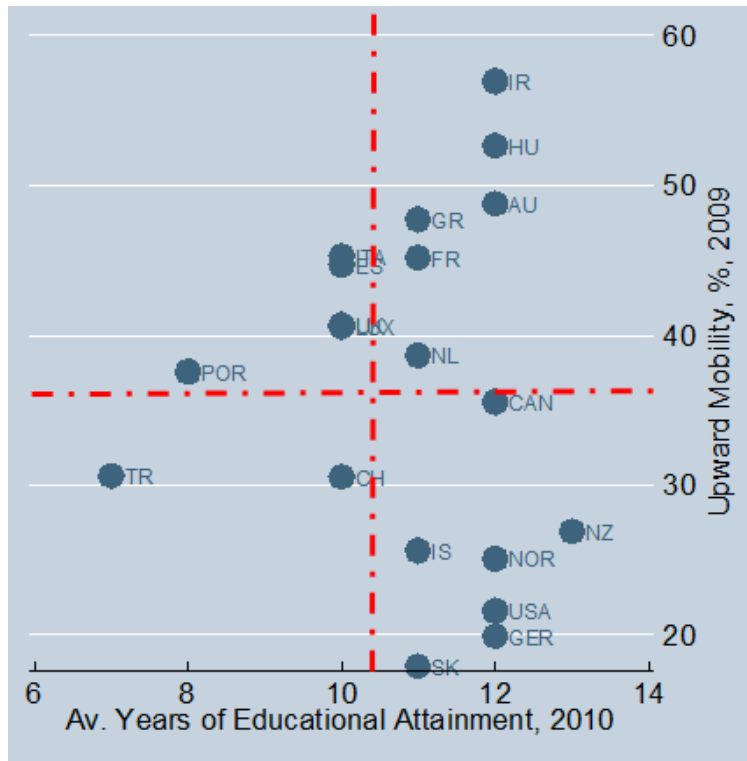
High levels of downward mobility in prosperous countries such as Denmark, Iceland and Norway are also worth noting. This may be linked to the fact that earnings prospects of jobs that do not require tertiary education are relatively higher in these countries: after New Zealand and Sweden, Denmark and Norway have the lowest premium for college-educated workers.⁵

For a country to undergo a healthy social and economic transformation, and for growth to be translated into development, new generations must receive better education than the previous ones. Upward intergenerational mobility in education is therefore critical particularly for developing countries. Figure 3 compares average years of schooling and the proportion of young adults with a higher level of education than their parents for OECD countries. In Turkey, both the upwards mobility rate at 30% and the mean years of schooling at 7 are radically below OECD averages. This situation certainly does not cater the needs of Turkey's ambitious 2023 goals. Other countries below the OECD average in terms of educational attainment, such as United Kingdom, Italy and Poland,

⁵ OECD Education at a Glance 2012

were able to attain higher intergenerational mobility levels in education. When considered together, these two facts imply that Turkey's convergence to the OECD average of educational attainment will not happen very soon.

Figure 3: Intergenerational Upwards Mobility in Education and Average Educational Attainment



Source: European Labor Force Survey 2009, Adult Literacy Survey 2009, OECD Education at a Glance 2012 and Barro & Lee 2011

Intergenerational Mobility in Terms of Quality of Education

Growth, development, and poverty reduction not necessarily depend on the number of years individuals spend in a classroom.⁶ What really matters is the knowledge and skills they acquire in school. In other words, access to school and access to education are not necessarily interchangeable concepts. Quality of education below certain standards implies that human potential as well as physical and technical infrastructure is not being utilized adequately. Hence, education policies should target not only schooling rates but also the quality of education. All of this applies to equality of opportunity: offering high-quality knowledge and skills in schools irrespective of socioeconomic level is just as important as making sure those individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds have access to schools.

⁶ World Bank Education Strategy 2020 (2010), The World Bank

In Turkey, educational attainment and income level of parents have a large impact on the quality of education students receive. High-income families are able to pay for private teaching institutions and tutors, which lead to inequality of opportunity in high school and university entrance examinations that already are prone to harsh competition.⁷ Table 1 presents educational attainment level of parents by the type of school based on the 2006 PISA survey results. Among students who study in science high schools, which perform the best in university entrance exams, 68% have at least one college-educated parent. The share of students with a college-educated parent is 11.8% in regular schools which do not hold an examination for admission. The rate is as low as 3.6% among vocational high schools that have undergone a major loss of reputation in the last few decades. In multi-program high schools and vocational high schools, more than half of students' parents have a primary school diploma at best. However, more than half have college-educated parents in Anatolian high schools and Anatolian vocational high schools. The transmission of the quality as well as the level of education between generations is quite alarming. This situation implies that Turkey suffers from severe inequality of opportunity, both in terms of quality and the level of education.

Table 1: Education Level of Parents in Different Types of High Schools in Turkey⁸, %, 2006

Education Level of Parent, %	Science High Schools	Anatolian High Schools	Anatolian Vocational High Schools	General High Schools	Vocational Schools	Multi-Program High Schools	Total
Below Primary School	--	1	3	5	3	7	4
Primary School	3	18	28	30	40	47	33
Middle School	3	9	15	20	26	22	21
High School	20	36	29	29	24	18	27
Vocational Training School	6	8	11	5	4	4	5
University	69	29	15	12	4	2	11
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

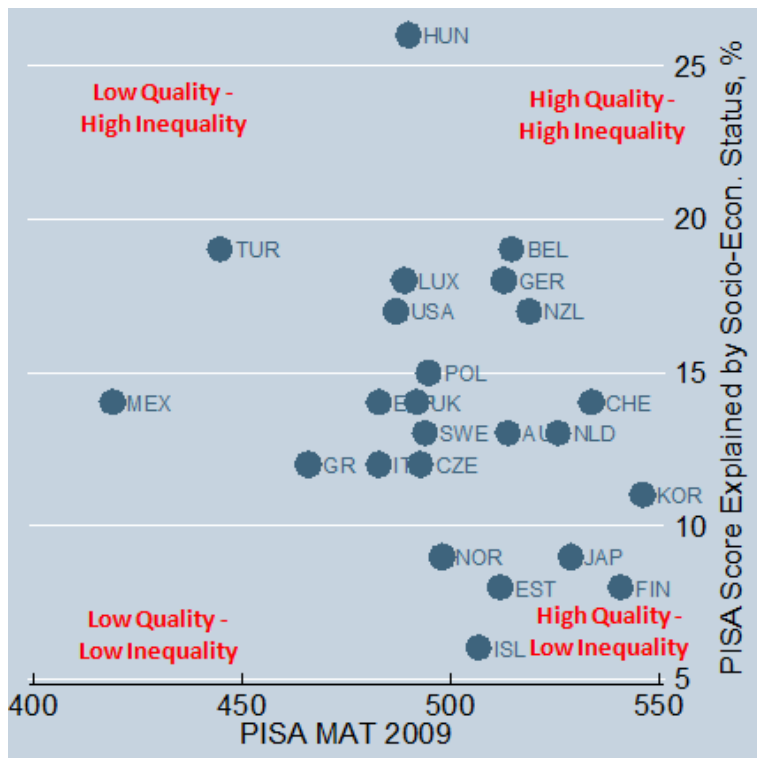
Source: Polat 2009, PISA 2006

⁷ At this point it should be emphasized that the private teaching institutions and private tutoring systems in Turkey are not the cause but the effect of the problem to access to quality education.

⁸ Science High Schools, Anatolian High Schools and Anatolian Vocational High Schools select their students based on a national entry examination, while other schools do not.

It is possible to define the education system in Turkey with the “low quality-high inequality” duo. Figure 4 below compares the percentage of variance in student performance explained by students' socio-economic background and average PISA mathematics score for 15-year-old children in OECD countries. Turkey is among the top in terms of inequality of opportunity and is at the bottom in terms of the quality of education. In other words, the living conditions of students is a very important determinant in the quality of education offered in Turkey, which already does not have very high standards.

Figure 4: Average PISA Mathematics Score and % Effect of Socio-economic* Status in Explaining PISA Scores, 2009



Source: OECD

* The impact of the socioeconomic status indicator was calculated by the OECD based on the information collected about the parents and life conditions of students who participated in the 2009 PISA survey.

Conclusion

Turkey has gone through a major socio-economic transformation since the 1980s, but it failed to turn this into an opportunity to improve its education system. It has made the biggest leap among the OECD countries in terms of GDP and thus achieved a clear progress in income convergence (Figure 5). However, the upward intergenerational mobility in education is remarkably low compared to developed economies. Investment in education has been disproportionate to GDP growth, which implies

limited technological transformation, scientific advancement and productivity increase in the future. In other words, Turkey's efforts to become a high-income economy limp when it comes to improving the quality of its human capital.

Figure 5: Intergenerational Mobility in Education and GDP Growth



Source: European Labor Force Survey 2009, Adult Literacy Survey 2009, World Development Indicators

The mobility of a country between categories of development level depends on its capacity to enable intergenerational upwards mobility in education. A country unable to improve its human capital cannot increase its competitiveness in a sustainable way. With poverty remaining a severe problem, policy makers have yet to provide equality of opportunity in Turkey. Yet, figures point to weak performance on the issue, both qualitatively and quantitatively. Turkey aims to place itself in the league of high-income economies, while countries in this group have achieved a remarkably better position in terms of equality of opportunity. The ambitious targets it has set for 2023, such as “making it to the first league in R&D and innovation” or “exporting knowledge and technology” cannot be reached without making better use of its human capital. More importantly, beyond economic concerns, ensuring equality of opportunity in education is one of the key responsibilities of a social state. Yet the figures of schooling rates and quality of education suggest that Turkey has failed in this regard.

ANNEX 1: Average Years of Schooling in OECD Countries

	2010	1995
Australia	12	12
Austria	10	8
Belgium	11	10
Canada	12	11
Czech Republic	12	11
Denmark	10	10
Estonia	10	10
Finland	10	9
France	11	9
Germany	12	9
Greece	11	9
Hungary	12	8
Iceland	11	9
Ireland	12	11
Italy	10	8
Luxemburg	10	9
Netherlands	11	10
New Zealand	13	12
Norway	12	11
Poland	10	9
Portugal	8	7
Slovakia	11	11
Slovenia	12	11
Spain	10	8
Sweden	12	11
Switzerland	10	10
Turkey	7	5
United Kingdom	10	9
USA	13	13
OECD Average	11	10

Source: Barro & Lee 2011