METU Studies in Development, 24 (2) 1997, 151-159

Introduction: Why education ?

Meltem Dayıoğlu

Department of Economics, Middle East Technical University, Ankara 06531

The year 1996 marks the 40th anniversary of the Middle East Technical University. In celebration of 40 years of excellence, as the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, we decided to devote one of the issues of the "METU Studies in Development" to education. The purpose of this special issue is to draw the attention of researchers and policy makers to the issue of education and invite the relevant parties to think critically about the educational problems faced today and formulate possible solutions.

Turkey suffers from a low level of human capital stock. Despite the fact that much has been achieved since the 1950s in terms of increasing the average level of education in the country, the majority of the population (age 6 and above) still have only a primary school level education. More importantly, a good number of people have either no education or only manage to become functionally literate.[1] Compared to developed countries, the relatively lower school enrollment ratio at the basic educational level suggests that Turkey is far from achieving universal basic education.[2] It further indicates that the stock problem will continue to be an issue of concern in the future as well. The burden of the lost educational opportunity falls more heavily on women and those living in the poorer parts of Turkey. The large disparity in terms of

---

1 According to the 1990 General Census of Population, 46% of the population have a primary school diploma. 19.5% and 16% of the population consist of illiterates and functional literates respectively.

2 Basic education refers to primary school plus junior-high school.

enrollment ratios between male and female children and among the different regions of the country suggest that any proposed educational policy scheme should especially address these disadvantaged groups.

The issue of education is a delicate one since any changes made to the system affects the young minds in an irreversible fashion. The importance of devising appropriate and timely educational policies stem from this irreversible nature of educational investment and the fact that it operates with a time lag. In other words, any investment in education, no matter how sizable, does not produce immediate results. Therefore, advance planning is needed if the desired results are to be obtained in a timely manner. From the political point of view, the fact that educational investments do not produce immediate and visible returns mean that the political rewards to such investments are hard to harvest. It is probably for this reason that up to now, political parties have not made the issue of education their primary concern in their political campaigns. It must be again for this reason that the previous governments have shied away from implementing the envisaged 8-year compulsory education legalized in 1973 by securing sufficient financing.

The heated discussions going-on now in the parliament and in the streets of Turkey indicate the appropriateness of the chosen topic for this special issue. The opposing arguments of the involved parties regarding the establishment of an all embracing basic education system reflect the concerns of the relevant parties over the benefits of 8-year general education. The main motivation behind the desire to establish a single track 8-year compulsory education seems to be the elimination of the current dual system (general education vs. religious based teaching). Although we would have preferred to see the desire to have better educated individuals as the driving force behind the proposed change, nevertheless, the proposed system is a belated celebration for the children and the country. Education is good not only because it benefits the individuals receiving it but because it is an integral part of many issues that we want to see resolved. It might be appropriate at this point to take the opportunity to briefly discuss why promoting at least basic education is sound politics not only for the children but for the welfare of the nation as well which might help ease the tension built toward the proposed system:

1. Investment in human capital in the form of education has high private and social rates of return (see Dayıoğlu 1995, Kasnakoğlu and Dayıoğlu, 1997; Tansel 1994 for Turkey and Psacharopoulos, 1993 for a number of countries). Investment in human capital augments labor productivity enabling individuals to command higher wages in the labor market making educational investment

desirable.[3] Private returns to education often surpass public returns which take into account public cost of education since the cost of schooling, especially at the basic educational level, is for the most part state financed. However, when the spillover effects of education (in the form of lower child mortality, better environmental protection etc.) accruing to the society are considered, social returns probably surpass the private returns from education and the returns obtained from other forms of investment (for instance physical investment) making educational investment economically sound (Psacharopolous, 1985).

2. Investment in education promotes economic growth and more importantly, sustaining economic growth is possible only through continuous investment in education. The positive relationship between education and economic growth is well-documented (see Schultz, 1961; Denison, 1962; Griliches and Jorgenson, 1966). Empirical evidence shows that countries with high levels of school enrollment are also those with high levels of economic growth (Krueger, 1968; Barro, 1991). If economic growth is desired, then creating a well-educated population becomes an indispensable part of national policy.

3. Education can be looked upon as a promising tool to reduce income inequality (Chiswick 1974; Tinbergen, 1970; Langoni, 1977; Özgediz, 1980). Although empirical evidence is mixed at this point, educational policies accompanied by other reforms (such as policies to reduce unemployment, land- and tax reforms) can work toward equalizing the income distribution and hence, contribute toward the social and political harmony of the country.

4. Parallel to the above mentioned point, education can also be used as a policy instrument in the combat against poverty (Blau, Behrman and Wolfe, 1988). Better educated individuals will stand at a better chance of finding gainful employment and hence, earn a living that is compatible with a humanly standard of living. In reducing poverty, the effect of education might be felt more strongly in an indirect fashion through the role education plays in reducing fertility, assuring better nutrition and increasing productivity. However, just as in the case of income distribution, education by itself cannot

---

[3] There is also the argument (the screening hypothesis) that education has no role in augmenting labor productivity but rather acts as a screening device of the inherit ability differences among the individuals. In other words, individuals are able to command higher wages in the labor market not because of their increased productivity due to education but because employers understand that individuals with high levels of schooling are inherently more able (see Arrow, 1973; Taubman and Wales, 1973; Van der Gaag and Vijverberg, 1989).

be solely relied upon to reduce poverty but rather, should be considered as part of a more comprehensive program.

5. Regional disparity which is brought about by differentiating investments in physical and/or human capital can challenge the political stability of the nation and hinder economic growth. The role of education in reducing regional disparity is essentially related to the role it plays in promoting growth and reducing income inequality discussed above. Investment in human capital through education can help tab the unused capacity in the "neglected" regions and bring different parts of the country to equal footing in terms of resources and therefore, promote growth and reduce regional disparity in the long-run.

6. Education can be considered as a long-term policy instrument in reducing gender inequality. Empowering women through education will not only uplift their status in the labor market (by enabling them to get better paying jobs and in breaking the glass-ceiling) but will also alleviate their position in the society through their increased political and social participation and representation. Educating women will probably bring about more benefit to the society than to the women receiving the education. Empirical evidence shows that women's education matters more than men's in reducing infant and child mortality and in increasing child health (Subbaro and Raney, 1995). Women's education plays the biggest role in reducing fertility and achieving the desired family-size (Schultz 1993; for Turkey see Ünalan, 1994; Biliker, Haznedaroğlu, Emiroğlu, 1994). However, the most important role of women's education is probably the indirect role it plays in breaking the vicious cycle of poverty through the increase in children's health which in turn increases their school attainment and achievement, thus enabling them to get better paying jobs.

7. Promoting basic education can play a crucial role in reducing the number of child workers and in helping them attain a higher standard of living in the future. A sizable proportion of children who quit school after completing primary school or even before completing it enter the labor market as child workers.[4] Lacking the basic skills needed for the job and quite often unaware of their basic rights, child workers are often exploited being made to work under unfavorable conditions with almost to nothing pay. These children are not only deprived of their childhood but also of future economic opportunities that could

---

[4] A recent survey by the State Institute of Statistics estimates that over 1 million children are employed. However, the true figure is thought to be much higher than the estimated number since the large number of working children are found in the informal sector which is not very well covered in the conducted survey.

have been brought by further schooling. Recent studies (Tunalı, 1994; Dayıoğlu, 1997) show that the incidence of child labor is much lower among those who attend school and that education can be effectively used as a deterrent of child labor.

The papers selected for this issue on education come from a variety of academic disciplines and point to one important aspect of education; that it is multi-faceted. The papers and topics presented in this issue will only give a flavor of the rich and exciting field of education. It is important to point out that the purpose of the issue is not to cover all different aspects of education- that would rather be a challenge- but rather to illustrate the complex structure of the field of education and urge the policy makers to avoid myopic consideration but rather act in a way so as to increase the social welfare of the country.

The first paper by Emine Beton and Tümay Ertek entitled "Returns to Education in North Cyprus" investigates the private returns to schooling and considers North Cyprus as a case study. The results support the findings of numerous other studies carried out in this field that the level of education positively affect individual incomes so that from the private point of view education is a sound economic investment. The authors also find that females in North Cyprus tend to earn less than their male counterparts. However, the earnings differential between the genders is found to be much smaller than what is recorded in other countries specifically in South Cyprus and Turkey.

The second paper by Robert Gitter entitled "Education of the American Workforce: A Study in Contrasts" addresses to another form of education - post-schooling training of individuals. Gitter looks at the American workforce and argues that a large number of individuals in the workforce lack the necessary skills to find gainful employment. Gitter argues that the failure of the formal education system in this regard can be remedied through appropriate government programs designed to provide training to the American youth and the workforce. He criticizes the current government programs and points out that post-school training for the most part is a complement to education. He makes a number of policy recommendations in an effort to increase the effectiveness of post-school training as well as that of formal schooling and government training programs.

The third paper by Nil Demet Güngör entitled "Education and Economic Growth in Turkey 1980-1990: A Panel Study" examines the effect of education on economic growth by specifically considering the growth in industrial output during the 1980-1990 period. Güngör finds that the educational attainment of the industrial workers affects the industrial output positively. However, she concludes that for education to have an effect on output a threshold level of

education must be achieved which is found to be four to five years of educational attainment. The author also looks at the interdependence between education and technology and education and physical capital. However, the analyses fail to produce conclusive results for the studied period.

The fourth paper entitled the "Basic Problems Faced in the Education of Journalism in Turkey and Solution Proposals" by Ayşe İnal concentrates on the question on how the education in journalism should be carried out. She criticizes the current educational system for completely adhering to the teachings of classical pedagogy which pushes the students to a passive status and thereby creating a one way communication system; a flow of information from teacher to the student without much interaction between the two parties. Instead, İnal proposes the adoption of critical pedagogy for education in journalism which she claims would look at the media with a critical eye and help bridge the gap between theory and practice.

The fifth paper entitled "Gender, Branch and School Social Class Composition Effects on Verbal and Numerical Abilities of Lycee Seniors in Turkey" by Ruhi Köse also looks at the current educational system and investigates the factors that affect the verbal and numerical abilities of lycee seniors. A special emphasis is given to the investigation of the ability differences between male and female children. The study finds that the numerical and verbal ability scores of male seniors surpass those of females but this difference is reduced when branch of study and school social class composition are controlled for. The study further indicates that the school social class composition and branch of study play a bigger role in determining the variation in verbal and numerical abilities than the gender effect. Based on the finding of the study, Köse argues against the presently implemented curriculum tracking and the educational policies since no relationship between the lycee curriculum and the level of student performance measured in terms of numerical and verbal abilities is observed.

The last paper entitled "Total Quality Management and Institutions of Higher Education" by Ömer Yağız investigates the current educational system as well but focuses on higher education. He looks at the quality related problems faced by the Turkish universities today and the causes of these problems and urges the universities to implement Total Quality Management. He argues that quality is a strategic concept that plays a crucial role in the success of all organizations today including universities. If successfully implemented, Total Quality Management can play an important role in solving the problems faced by universities and in the betterment of the educational system. Yağız proposes specific approaches as to how Total Quality

Management can be implemented at the universities throughout Turkey.

We hope that these six papers on the issue of education will further evoke the interest of the researchers to carry out studies in their field of interest by making education their focus of attention. As the evidence surmounts on the important role education plays in all spheres of social, political and economic lives, policy makers will be more willing to treat the issue of education more seriously and take measures to promote not only basic education but higher levels of schooling as well. It is our wish that the designed educational policies be directed more toward the neglected and therefore, the disadvantaged groups of the society, more specifically toward women and the individuals living in the poorer parts of Turkey.

References

ARROW, K. (1973), "Higher education as a Filter", *Journal of Public Economics*, 2(3), 193-216.

BARRO, R. J. (1991), "Economic Growth in a Cross Section of Countries", *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 106 (2), 407-43.

BİLİKER, M. A., HAZNEDAROĞLU, D. and EMİROĞLU, N. (1994), "Maternal and Child Health", in *Demographic and Health Survey 1993*, Ankara: Hacettepe Institute of Population Studies, 87-106.

BLAU, D. M., BEHRMAN, J. R. and WOLFE, B. L. (1988), "Schooling and Earnings Distributions with Endogenous Labor Force Participation, Marital Status and Family Size", *Economica*, 55 (219), 297-316.

CHISWICK, B. R. (1974), *Income Inequality: Regional Analysis within a Human Capital Framework*, National Bureau of Economic Research, New York: Columbia University Press.

DAYIOĞLU, M. (1995), Earnings Inequality Between Genders in Turkey, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Middle East Technical University, Ankara.

—— (1997), *Analyses of The 1994 Child Labor Force Survey Results,* report prepared for ILO.

DENISON, E. F. (1962), *Sources of Economic Growth in the United States and the Alternatives Before Us*, Committee for Economic Development, Supplementary Paper No. 13, New York.

GRILICHES, Z. and JORGENSON, D. W. (1966), "Sources of Measured Productivity Change: Capital Input", *American Economic Review*, 61 (2), 50- 61.

KASNAKOĞLU, Z. and DAYIOĞLU, M.(1997), "Female Labor Force Participation and Earnings Differentials Between Genders in Turkey" in J. M. Rives and M. Yousefi (eds.), *Economic Dimensions of Gender Inequality: A Global Perspective*,

Greenwood Press, forthcoming.

KRUEGER, A. (1968), "Factor Endowments and Per Capita Income Differences Among Countries", *Economic Journal*, 78, 641-59.

LANGONI, C. G. (1977), "Income Distribution and Economic Development: The Brazilian Case", in M. Intriligator (ed.), *Frontiers of Quantitative Economics*,Vol B, Amsterdam: North Holland Publishers, 587-606.

ÖZGEDİZ, S. (1980), "Education and Income Distribution in Turkey", in E. Özbudun and A. Ulusan (eds.), *The Political Economy of Income Distribution in Turkey,* New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 501-24.

PSACHAROPOULOS, G. (1993), "Returns to Investment in Education: A Global Update", Staff Working Papers, WPS 1067, Washington, D.C.: The World Bank.

SCHULTZ, T. P. (1993) "Investment in Schooling and Health of Women and Men: Quantities and Returns", *Journal of Human Resources,* 28 (4), 694-733.

SCHULTZ, T. W. (1961) "Investment in Human Capital", *American Economic Review*, 51, 1-17.

—— (1985), "Returns to Education: A Further International Update and Implications", *Journal of Human Resources*, 20(4), 583-604.

SIS (1993), *1990 Census of Population*, Ankara.

TANSEL, A. (1994), "Wage Employment and Returns to Education for Urban Men and Women in Turkey", *Economics of Education Review*, 13 (4), 305-20.

TAUBMAN, P. and WALES, T. (1973), "Higher Education, Mental Ability and Screening", *Journal of Political Economy*, 81, 28-55.

TINBERGEN, J. (1970), "A Positive and Normative Theory of Income Distribution", *Review of Income and Wealth*, 16 (2), 221-34.

TUNALI, İ. (1994), "Education and Work: Experiences of 6-14 Year Old Children in Turkey", in T. Bulutay (ed.), *Education and the Labor Market in Turkey*, SIS, Ankara, 109-43.

ÜNALAN, T. (1994), "Fertility Preferences", in *Demographic and Health Survey 1993*, Ankara: Hacettepe Institute of Population Studies, 69-76.

VAN DER GAAG, J. and VIJVERBERG, W. (1989), "Wage Determinants in Côte d'Ivoire: Experience, Credentials and Human Capital", *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, 37 (2), 371-81.

Özet

Eğitim neden önemli ?

1996'da Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi'nin 40. kuruluş yılını kutladık. İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi olarak ODTÜ'nün yüksek öğrenimde 40 yılı aşkın süredir verdiği çabadan ötürü Fakülte'nin "ODTÜ Gelişme Dergisi"nin bir sayısını eğitim konusuna ayırmanın anlamlı olacağını düşündük. Böylelikle "Eğitim" başlığı altında bir özel sayı çıkarmayı planladık. Elinizde bulunan bu sayı eğitim konusunu değişik bakış açılarından irdeleyen altı makaleden oluşmaktadır. Makalelerin farklı akademik disiplinlerden gelen araştırmacılar tarafından yazılmış olması konunun çok boyutlu olduğunu göstermesi bakımından önem taşımaktadır. Bu özel sayının amacı değişik disiplinlerde çalışan akademisyen ve araştırmacıların konuya ilgilerini artırmak ve bu konuda yapılan çalışmalara bir hız katmaktır. Dileğimiz eğitimin önemini vurgulayan çalışmaların sayısının artmasıyla birlikte, politika üreten kesimin konuya duyarlılıklarını artırıp eğitime gereken önemi vermelerini sağlamaktır.