

Türkiye

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Introduction

Overview of Education System

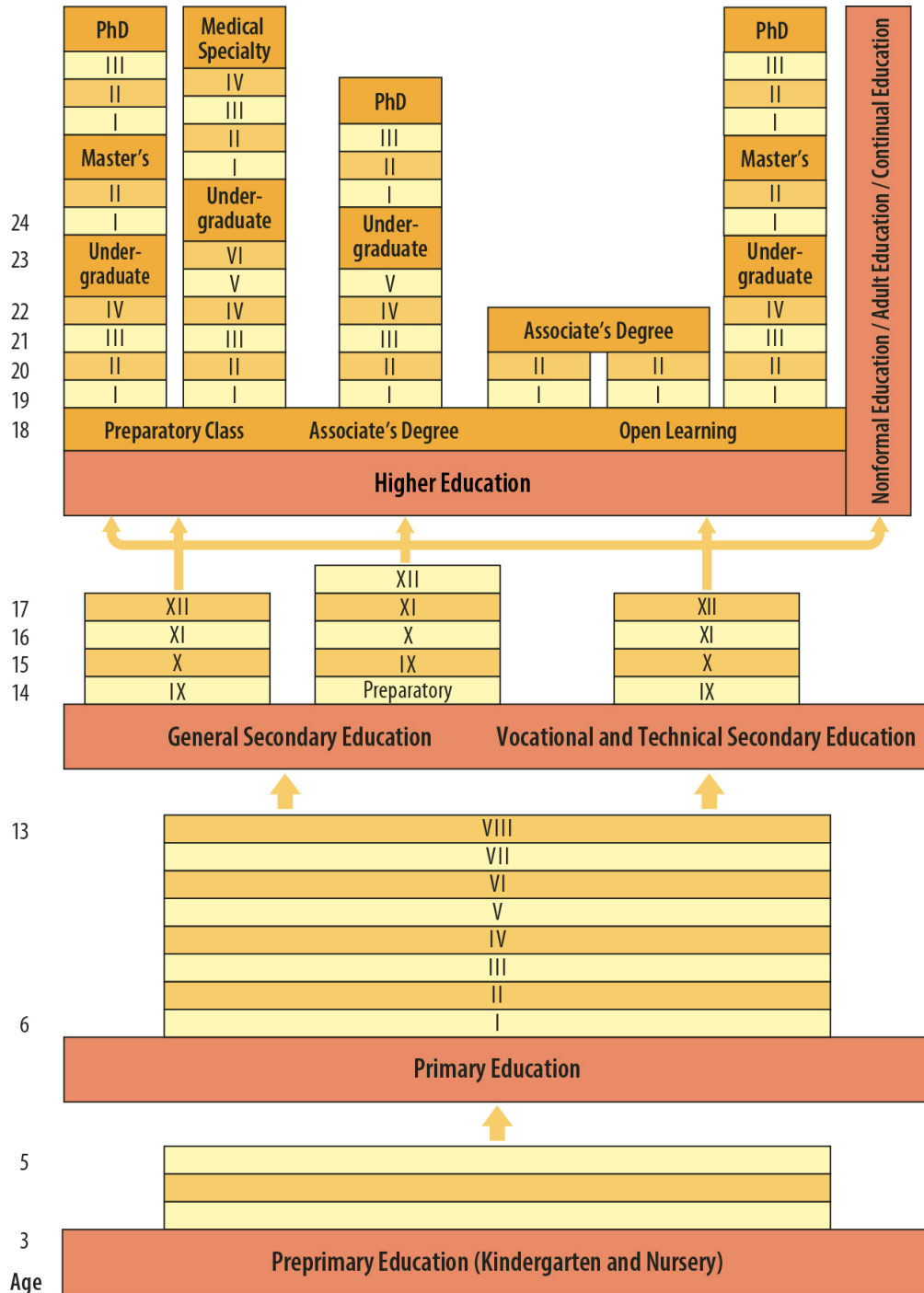
The National Education System, determined by National Education Basic Act No. 1739, consists of two main parts, namely formal education and nonformal education. Formal education is the regular education conducted within a school for individuals in a certain age group and at the same level, under programs developed in accordance with the purpose. Formal education includes preprimary school, primary school, lower secondary school, upper secondary school, and higher education institutions. Nonformal education covers citizens who have never entered the formal education system, who are at any level of it, or who have left at any level, and may accompany formal education or be independent of it. In accordance with the general objectives and basic principles of national education, the objectives of nonformal education are as follows:

- To teach citizens to read and write and to provide them with the possibility of continual education so that they may complete their education
- To provide citizens with the opportunity of education that shall help them adjust to scientific, technological, economic, social, and cultural developments
- To provide an education that serves to protect, develop, promote, and assimilate the values of Türkiye's national culture¹

In Türkiye, the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) is responsible for planning, programming, executing, monitoring, inspecting, and assessing all education and training facilities.² MoNE conducts educational activities on a central level in the Republic of Türkiye. Administrators at each level, including Ministry headquarters, central organizations, and provincial organizations, are accountable to upper management. Ministry and central organization administrators can delegate their authority to lower management, provided that they clearly define authority limits in a written document. Legislation on primary and secondary education enacted in 2012 extended the duration of compulsory education in Türkiye to 12 years. This system is named the 4 + 4 + 4 Educational System because it covers four years of primary school, four years of lower secondary school, and four years of upper secondary school.³

According to the Turkish Constitution, Turkish is the official language of the country. The language of instruction in schools must be Turkish. Exhibit 1 presents the general structure of the Turkish education system.

Exhibit 1: General Structure of the Turkish Education System



Use and Impact of PIRLS

Türkiye participated in PIRLS for the first time during the 2001 assessment cycle. PIRLS 2001 presented the first international snapshot of student achievement in reading in Türkiye. Students' performance was below the international average. Despite dissemination efforts, the public paid little attention to PIRLS 2001 results. After that cycle, Türkiye did not participate in PIRLS until 20 years later, when Türkiye participated in the PIRLS 2021 cycle.

The Language/Reading Curriculum in Primary Grades

The Turkish Language Curriculum, which is implemented in primary and secondary schools, is structured to encompass knowledge, skills, and values. The curriculum enables students to acquire language skills and cognitive skills related to listening/watching, speaking, reading, and writing that they can use throughout their lives to develop individually and socially, communicate effectively, and acquire the habit of reading and writing with a passion for the Turkish language.

The Turkish Course Curriculum adopts the development of language skills and competencies as a prerequisite for learning in all other fields, personal and social development, and acquiring professional skills. The teaching program is organized to develop the structure and hierarchy of the acquisitions from Grades 1 to 8, including basic linguistic skills along with high-level cognitive skills of the students.

The aim of the Turkish Language Teaching Program is to enable students to:

- Develop their listening/watching, speaking, reading, and writing skills
- Use the Turkish language with consciousness, accuracy, and care, in accordance with the principles of speaking and writing
- Gain pleasure and consciousness using language by enriching their vocabulary based on what they read, listen, and watch, enabling them to develop their feelings, thoughts, and imaginations
- Acquire the love and habit for reading and writing
- Express their feelings and thoughts along with their views on a specific topic or their thesis orally and in written format effectively and in a comprehensive manner
- Develop their skills of research, exploration, interpretation, and mental structuring of knowledge
- Develop their skills of accessing, organizing, questioning, using, and generating knowledge through printed materials and from multimedia sources
- Evaluate and question what they read with a critical point of view
- Emphasize national, spiritual, moral, historical, and social values to strengthen their national feelings and thoughts
- Be aware of and adopt aesthetic and artistic values by way of the masterpieces belonging to Turkish and global culture and arts

In teaching reading skills, informative, narrative, and poetry texts are used. In addition to widely accepted authors and masterpieces, texts with literary and cultural values are included to teach reading skills. Accurate and qualified translations of texts selected from world literature and pieces of art from the Turkish republics and the Balkan Turks also are included.⁴

According to the Weekly Course Timetable of the Primary Education Institutions implemented by primary and secondary schools, and approved by the decision of the Turkish Board of Education, dated January 11, 2021, and numbered 44, the Turkish language course is taught as follows:

- 10 hours a week in the first and second classes of primary schools
- 8 hours a week in the third and fourth classes
- 6 hours a week in the fifth and sixth classes
- 5 hours a week in the seventh and eighth classes⁵

Professional Development Requirements and Programs

The Ministry of National Education Directorate of Teacher Training and Education is responsible for teachers' professional development in Türkiye. When deciding what types of professional development to provide, the Ministry considers requests from other directorates, teachers, and school administrators, as well as new developments in the field. Each year, the Ministry's professional development department conducts a needs assessment, selects high priority topics, and develops a professional development plan. Teachers and school administrators can register and participate in these programs.⁶

MoNE has released *Teacher Strategy Paper* and *General Competencies for Teaching Profession* in 2017 for professional development. *Teacher Strategy Paper* defines six fundamental components concerning initial teacher education, professional development, and employment processes that include preservice teacher education, selection and employment of prospective teachers, teachers' candidacy training and adaptation to the profession, career development and reward system, status of the teaching profession, and continual professional development. This document also includes overall objectives concerning these components and a discussion on how to realize the objectives through more specific goals and actions.^{7, 8}

Monitoring Student Progress in Reading

The Ministry of National Education is responsible for evaluating and assessing student performance in Türkiye. The only national examination with consequences for individual students who study in schools affiliated with the Directorate of Basic Education is the High School Entrance Exam (LGS), which is given to eighth grade students transitioning from lower secondary to upper secondary education. Two national assessment studies are conducted to monitor student progress

in Türkiye. The National Assessment of Student Learning (ABİDE) has been developed to provide reliable and comparative data to measure learning outcomes against the national curriculum. It is conducted for mathematics, science, and the Turkish language for fourth and eighth grade students, and mathematics, Turkish language and literature, physics, chemistry, and biology for tenth grade students. The other national assessment study is the Student Learning Achievement Monitoring assessment. It aims to provide schools with diagnostic information on students' strengths and weaknesses in Turkish, mathematics, and science.⁹

Response to COVID-19 Pandemic

Teaching and Learning During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Upon outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in Türkiye, remote education began on March 23, 2020, and lasted until the end of the term. As the pandemic continued and cases increased from time to time throughout the 2020–2021 academic year, education in schools was conducted both in person and remotely based on suggestions by the Scientific Committee of the Ministry of Health Affairs and decisions by the Ministry. In monitoring the progress of the pandemic within the period and in all locations, different methods of teaching and learning were realized in schools at the grade and class levels; explanatory notes were sent to school principals, and detailed explanations were made to the public.

Policy and Practice Changes

In the planning for face-to-face and remote educational activities implemented in preschools, primary schools, and secondary schools within the 2020–2021 academic year, the Ministry considered the preparedness of different position levels, which face-to-face education needs should take priority, and the examination processes for students. For face-to-face educational activities, the weekly course timetables organized by the Ministry were applied, and courses were taught by dividing the student numbers by two and considering safety measures for COVID-19.

In addition, all courses were taught in person in all grade levels of primary and secondary schools in the villages and some sparsely populated locations, in light of the decisions of the provincial/district committees of sanitation in cooperation with the provincial/district directorates of national education. Different applications were adopted in some provinces in consideration of the low-, medium-, and high-risk groups of those provinces.

Printed and electronic materials tailored to lessons were prepared and presented for the service of students, teachers, and parents to ensure the effective continuity of educational and training activities in the pandemic period, support the individual learning of students and prepare them effectively and competently for higher education, provide equality of opportunity in education, and create alternatives for learning in addition to textbooks for all grade levels.

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