



**“...Decentralisation in the delivery of public services is a necessary process, in the education and training areas as in other sectors, such as Public Health....”**

## ABSTRACT

### การกระจายอำนาจในบริบทของระบบการอบรม และการศึกษาสายวิชาชีพในตุรกี

โอลุช โบราจ

บี. กฎลเตคิน เชติเนอร์

ตุรกี ในฐานะประเทศผู้สมมติเข้าเป็นสมาชิกสหภาพยุโรป (European Union) ได้ทำการปฏิรูปประเทศเพื่อให้ผ่านกระบวนการยืดหยุ่นข้อบังคับของสหภาพยุโรป รวมถึงการเริ่มเจรจาเพื่อหน้าข้อตกลง ในการนี้ การพัฒนาคุณภาพของ การศึกษาและระบบการสอนให้ทันสมัยนับเป็นสิ่งสำคัญประการหนึ่งเพื่อให้ ประเทศสามารถรับมือกับปัญหาเศรษฐกิจและสังคมที่กำลังท้าทายอยู่ กระบวนการการกระจายอำนาจ (Decentralisation) ในบริบทของการอบรมและ การศึกษาสายวิชาชีพ (Vocational Education and Training-VET) ถือเป็นสิ่ง ความสัมพันธ์กับการปฏิรูปการเมืองในตุรกีและโครงการร่วมระหว่างรัฐบาลตุรกี กับคณะกรรมการการอุดหนุน เกณ โครงการ SVET (Strengthening VET)

สุดท้ายอาจสรุปจากกรณีของ VET นี้ได้ว่า ตุรกีได้พัฒนาระบบที่มีทั้ง การรวมศูนย์และการกระจายอำนาจในลักษณะเฉพาะของตัวเอง ประจำปี พ.ศ. 2002 ที่สำคัญคือ กระบวนการยืดหยุ่นที่มีขึ้นหลัง ค.ศ. 2002

*Keywords: Decentralisation in Turkey, SVET Project,*

*Turkish Accession to European Union, VET system in Turkey,*

## **Decentralisation in the Context of Vocational Education and Training (VET) System in Turkey**

B. Gültekin Çetiner

Oğuz Borat

### **Introduction**

Since the establishment of the Republic in 1923, Turkey has always had a relatively centralised government. By the years of centralised implementations, there were decentralised approaches to find immediate solutions to bureaucratic difficulties (Heper M, 2005).

That is why today in some areas centralised and in other decentralised structures can be observed. Decentralisation process in Turkey cannot be compared with the new member states of the EU, which used to be under soviet regime (Wollmann H, 1997); Turkish citizens have been satisfied and enjoyed the democratic approach of market economy and social partners' involvement in both centralised and decentralised manner.

Turkey passed the crossroad in December 2004, since the agreement between EU and Turkey reached in Brussels to open in a few months the negotiations with the EU. In addition, the negotiations initiated. In this perspective, strengthening the effectiveness and the

efficiency of its education and training system is crucial for the country to enable it to meet the economic and social challenges the country is facing.

Decentralisation in the delivery of public services is a necessary process, in the education and training areas as in other sectors, such as Public Health. This has been recognised by the Turkish Government, which is now undertaking significant changes in the management of the Public administration. Of course, the reform has to be progressive, carefully designed, implemented and monitored with the objective of ensuring the necessary conditions for enabling these changes to develop in a coherent and socially acceptable way.

Decentralisation is a process. It is not an end in itself. As a process, it involves a multiplicity of actors and their willingness to examine together how the delivery of services can be improved by modifying the ways decisions are being made, at which level, by whom, how and in which areas. It is furthermore a complex process, which evolves overtime and requires a careful and continuous assessment.

Decentralisation, whatever form it takes, involves the application of subsidiary, which is the principle of assigning functions to the lowest level of authority that can perform them the most efficiently. If it is properly designed, managed and monitored it can contribute improving the potential of the public service concerned to develop a more customer-oriented and a more transparent approach; thus making the system more accountable face to face with its clients.

Decentralisation is not just about transferring some specific power and authority in very specific and well defined management and process areas to lower stages of the administration structure. It may also

take different forms and involves other external actors, such, as in the case of Vocational Education and Training (VET), the social partners and the business community. Indeed, one of the products of VET is that of delivering to the Labour market the skills, it requires and, to that end, it is necessary that these partners are closely associated with the delivery of vocational education and training services.

It should be further stressed that decentralisation is not a one-way road. In fact, it is a two-way process leading to a rebalancing of responsibilities: the central authorities, under conditions to be carefully identified, withdraw from service delivery focuses its role on setting standards and in regulation – including monitoring and inspection, while the lower level(s) and/or the external bodies are empowered, within precise limit, to carry maximum possible authority and accountability for actual service delivery.

Although there are potential significant benefits to draw from decentralisation since it makes the public service concerned more flexible and capable of satisfying the existing and forthcoming needs and meeting the challenges it faces now and in the next future, decentralisation has also its risks and one has to be very careful in deciding any step forward.

A decentralisation strategy, especially in an area as sensitive as education and training, cannot take place without carefully weighing up the risks that it may entail if it is designed and implemented regardless of the specific features and the general cultural and historical environment of the systems it intends to reform (Hanson E. M., 1998). Decentralisation, for example, unless properly regulated, may lead to spending drifts at lower levels and thus result in a weakening of the budget constraints.

Alternatively, institutional change introduced via decentralisation clear guidelines and regulations as well as proper management training may result over time in increased discrepancies between VET schools performance. On the other hand, equity problem could emerge or be reinforced through decentralisation since experience has shown that schools in wealthy communities are frequently the ones which benefit most from any additional flexibility. Therefore, it is quite clear that the approach regarding decentralisation has to be both progressive and carefully designed.

#### Decentralised Approaches in VET System

One of the important decentralised approaches in Turkey is in vocational education and training (VET) system. General high schools and VET schools in formal education are inside the centralised structure of the Ministry of National Education (MoNE), which has been partially decentralised since 2002. Whereas, vocational training centres inside the non-formal education, in which dual system has been applied, are directed by decisions of SME's at local level. For instance, the personnel recruited in an SME are mainly the apprentices of the SME. In addition, activities in public training centres are designated by requirement of local work force.

One of the important prerequisites for any decentralisation strategy to succeed is that it should be based on existing provisions and regulations governing the functioning of the system. In this sense, the July 2002 existing Regulation (Official Gazette, 2002) governing

vocational education and training offer a good framework for bringing closer VET services to their end-users, namely the business community and the society. With its Articles concerning, for example, the setting up of VET Provincial Advisory Committees or those covering the internal management of VET schools, curriculum content, inspection and assessment, these Regulations offer the basis for strengthening a customer-oriented approach. In other words, the decentralisation strategy regarding the VET system in Turkey has to be based on the existing Regulation, whatever specific adjustments may have to be made – instead of considering a new Law right from the beginning, a new Law.

When considering decentralisation of VET, a number of priorities issues have to be addressed – each of them representing a key area of concern and development.

1) The need to reinforce the interactions between the VET system at all levels down to the School and Training centre with the social partners and the business community as well as with the territorial entities: In this respect, the July 2002 Regulation on VET, through the establishment of the National and Provincial VET Advisory Councils offers already a springboard for mobilizing the social partners and the business community around the functioning of the system. Their role in guiding MoNE and the Provincial Directorate for Education is important and is strengthened, especially in relation of providing the authorities concerned with a longer-term view of the required skills and competencies. Such an analysis will help then the same authorities to better adjust the supply of VET resources. This is especially expected.

2) The need to improve the internal functioning of the VET school with the objective of enabling more flexibility in its management, more

transparency and a more cohesive development: In this respect, the provisions contained in the July 2002 Regulation on VET, for example by establishing in each VET school an "institutional development team" next to other committees and commissions, offers a positive start for reconciling increased School autonomy with proper, budget, financial and pedagogical management, respecting the guidelines laid down by MoNE. This approach, already in place in all EU Member States with the setting up of "Schools' Governing Boards" of various types, requires reflecting further about the legal status of the school that may be required to enable the VET institution to become more performing and better related to its environment.

3) The need to ensure a balance between the delivery of high quality standards teaching materials according to guidelines decided at national level and the necessary flexibility the VET institution must have to adapt the curriculum to the local conditions: In this respect, the July 2002 Regulation on VET emphasises the importance of curriculum development and as key cornerstone for modernizing the VET system. This is even reinforced if and when VET institutions become more enable to adjust their teaching process. A dynamic balance has to be searched in relation to Curriculum guidelines. This is especially important for the VET institutions to enable them to deliver the relevant skills and competence needed by the business community while, nevertheless maintaining overall coherency across VET institutions with the general objective of promoting high quality teaching. Decentralisation in this key area will have to be combined with, and accompanied by the necessary development of more diversified in-service training provisions to be

implemented more closely at the level of VET institutions in close coordination with MoNE.

4) The need to strengthen the pro-active dimension of inspection and assessment as an instrument for helping the VET institutions and their staff to better contribute to improving the quality and the relevance of their teaching: In this respect, the July 2002 Regulation on VET underlines the contribution inspection and assessment, as central regulating functions, can make to improving the effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery. Such functions, when rendering through decentralisation the VET system more flexible, are becoming even more important. In this respect, inspection and assessment at all level becomes a tool for increasing the motivation of VET institutions and for advising them and their staff to develop a more participatory approach. In conjunction with the other areas just evoked, implementing a decentralisation strategy for the VET system may require further thinking about the way inspection and assessment could be a significant lever for ensuring internal coherency and cohesion throughout the system at national level.

Training centres of big enterprises such as IGDAS (Istanbul Natural Gas Distribution Corporation), THY (Turkish Airlines), MAN Turkey (Maschinenfabrik Augsburg-Nürnberg), TOFAŞ (Turkish Automotive Manufacturing Corporation), and etc. train students detached from central education system but some still voluntarily are using the MoNE's approach. Most of the enterprises sign protocols with training institutions/schools of cooperation to work together. Such as Municipality of Istanbul made agreement with MoNE and train students to recruit them straight ahead.

In addition, private sector has different approach of VET education, they establish specific training centres of their interest and they are not part of the centralised formal education system.

In terms of the decision mechanisms in VET system at local and national level, there are 3 main bodies:

The first is Central VET Council, whose decisions can not even be changed by the Minister as the Central Government cannot intervene to the decision making process.

Second type of body is at local levels and they are called Provincial VET Councils. Social partners are involved and they give decisions at local level and put in implementation through the governor of the province.

Likewise, there is Council of Employment at local level and they function in the same way with the VET Provincial Councils.

Since 2006, the unification of these two councils was under discussion and the related law was under preparation (amendment to law number 3308 and 4904). This work was carried out by MoNE, TISK, TURK-IS, Ministry of Labour and Social Security with the support of SVET<sup>1</sup> project. Such unification was one of the issues that was advised by European Training Foundation (ETF) to most of the EU states and finally has been realised in Turkey. This initiative of unification will be

---

<sup>1</sup> SVET (Strengthening the Vocational Education and Training System in Turkey) is a five-year project resulting from an agreement signed between the European Commission and the Government of Turkey, and has a total budget of € 58.2M. The project which started on 30th September 2002 aimed at strengthening Turkey's VET system rather than imposing an alien structure.

supported by the implementation of a project named Capacity Building of MoNE<sup>2</sup>.

Now both Provincial VET Council and Provincial Council of Employment are merged and have been converted into a unified Provincial VET and Employment Council to increase the communication and linkages between representatives of economic sector, VET system and local government.

Therefore, here it can be easily recognised that there are decentralised structures and mechanisms in Turkey.

All these happen to show that the system in Turkey indicates that there is decentralised and centralised mix system or partially decentralised system.

In this regard, one of the purposes of SVET is to contribute to reinforce the governance and the capacity building of managers of VET schools and training centres which is a key issue in the context of VET Reform. This issue – which relates closely to existing provisions contained in the July 2002 Regulation on Vocational and Technical Education (Official Gazette, 2002) and echoes those developed by Educational Research and Development Agency (EARGED /METARGEM) under MoNE in 2001 (School Development Model for Vocational Technical Education) concerns all aspects of VET Management, from strategic planning and need analysis to the definition of a school development plan with the objective of making the school/training centre more responsive to the skill needs of its territorial and sector environment and,

---

<sup>2</sup> This is a two-year project and has a total budget of € 3.7M. The project aims at the strengthening the organisational effectiveness and efficiency of MoNE.

thus, ensuring the professional insertion of the students/trainees. In this context, one of the main sub-issues is that of financial and human resources management, including for the provisions of training services by the school or training centre to companies, professional organisations, etc.

On the basis of the existing regulations governing VET in Turkey and through discussions with the main stakeholders (managers of VET Schools/Training centres, MoNE, social partners, the business community, etc.) an analysis of the training needs of selected pilot institutions regarding financial and human resources management, and corporate governance of pilot institutions and training centres will be developed. On the basis of the findings, the Task Force selected from the members of the Policy and Strategy Groups in the related projects will develop some examples to implement in some pilot School/Training centres on corporate governance, decentralisation and National Qualifications System (NQS) issues. It will provide institutions with the necessary knowledge and skills for ensuring efficient and cost-effective approaches – taking also into account the related experience concerning financial and human resources management in EU member states.

National Qualifications Framework (NQF), NQS and National Qualifications Authority (NQA) are strongly advised by EQF which is accepted by European Parliament in April 23, 2008 (European Communities, 2008). NQA in Turkey is one of the VET reform bodies established by means of the NQA law No. 5544 passed through parliament in October 7, 2006 which states a good example of decentralised system with its autonomous and social partner involvement oriented governance (Official Gazette, 2006).

In the existing education and training system in Turkey, monitor and evaluator roles of the central bodies are being strengthened. In this regards, both institutional and individual performance evaluations have been initiated. For this purpose, ILSIS network is being used. Within two years this system of performance evaluation are disseminated to all of the education institutions, and the output of the evaluations is transparent.

According to the performance evaluation outputs, some parts of the in service training programmes are being prepared by central bodies and some by provincial bodies.

In this framework, responsibilities are allocated to provincial bodies. For selection of school books, among the ones which are approved by Board of Education, and for learning materials school boards have been authorised.

Some of the articles of Public Reform Act was rejected by the former President A. Necdet Sezer in 4 August 2004; but the parliament continued to accept same articles and sent second time to this President. According to recent Law of Municipalities (law number: 5215, date: 09.07.2004) and Law of Local Administration (law number: 5215, date: 26.05.2005), which are parts of Public Reform Act related institutions will support the local education and training institutions with land provision, renovation services, and compensating some of their expenditures.

Consequently, it has to be mentioned that, short-term analysis and observations of Turkish administrative system would not be sufficient to understand and diagnose above mentioned mix system-centralised and decentralised. There are many other issues that need to be considered when reflecting about the necessary decentralisation – again, not as an end in it self or a ready-made solution, but as an evolutionary

and progressive process. What is important to underline is that such a process has to be geared, designed and implemented with great care, possibly by encouraging a voluntary approach and by associating all the actors concerned. All this by exploiting all the potentialities offered already by the existing Regulations. By encouraging also the exchange of experience and practices. By, also, keeping an open mind.

### Conclusion

It may be concluded in this paper that there are decentralised structures and mechanisms in Turkey in the context of VET. Regulations regarding the VET system in Turkey show that the system in Turkey indicates the decentralised and centralised nature of mix system or partially decentralised system. It is also concluded that decentralisation trends may not be well understood by short-term analysis and observation of only one area. Therefore, further analysis should be done in other areas such as Health sector in order to investigate the decentralisation trends.

## References

European Communities (2008), *The European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF)*, European Communities, European Commission Education and Culture Lifelong Learning: Education and Training policies, Coordination of Lifelong Learning Policies, ISBN 978-92-79-08474-4, Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, April 23, 2008

Hanson E. M. (1998) 'Strategies of educational decentralisation: key questions and core issues', *Journal of Educational Administration*, 36(2) 111 ~ 128

Heper M. (2005) 'Motherland Party Governments and Bureaucracy in Turkey, 1983-1988', *Governance*, 2 (4) 460 ~ 471

Official Gazette of the Republic of Turkey (2002), 'Vocational Education and Training Regulations', No: 24804, July 3, 2002

Official Gazette of the Republic of Turkey (2006), 'Occupational Qualifications Authority Law', No. 5544 , October 7, 2006.

Wollmann H. (1997) 'Institution building and decentralisation in formerly socialist countries: the cases of Poland, Hungary, and East Germany', *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy* 15(4) 463 ~ 480

ວາງສາກູລີໃປຕຶກໝາ