Chapter 2. Promoting national goals for student learning

This chapter looks at how national goals for learning in Turkey influence student assessment practices. In Turkey, while successive curricula reforms have sought to create a more competency-based, student-centred approach to instruction, teachers have not been well-supported to apply these changes in the classrooms. The chapter suggests that developing a national curriculum framework will provide greater coherence and clarity to guide future curricula reforms, while clear learning standards in core subjects will help teachers better understand national expectations for what students are expected to know and be able to do. Finally, it suggests activities to communicate learning goals nationally, so that schools feel trusted and supported when they introduce changes to teaching and learning.
**Introduction**

The measure of an effective assessment system is the extent to which it promotes student learning and the achievement of national learning goals. For this to occur, learning objectives need to be clear so that educators know what should be assessed and how progress can be measured. In most countries, national learning goals are articulated through the curriculum and/or national learning standards. In addition, the curriculum and standards, and the goals themselves, need to be clearly communicated to national stakeholders so that they can be understood and implemented successfully. Finally, while schools are introducing the desired measures, they must also be properly supported to ensure that they are confident in their practices and that these align with the country’s vision for teaching and learning.

Turkey’s learning goals focus on the mastery of competencies in order to prepare students to be productive citizens in the 21st century. Teachers are expected to engage in student-centred instruction and use formative assessment techniques to continuously determine and improve student performance. Research and interviews with the OECD review team show, however, that schools do not always focus on developing student competencies, and that student-centred instruction is not always employed in classrooms (Topcu, 2014[1]; Kan, 2017[2]; Kırkgöz, 2008[3]).

This chapter provides recommendations about how Turkey’s vision for teaching and learning can be better reflected in the curriculum and learning standards, which would provide teachers and schools with a clearer understanding of what exactly they can do to promote the country’s learning goals. Furthermore, this chapter suggests how communication around Turkey’s vision can be improved and how schools can be better supported in using the curriculum and standards, which would further help embed and sustain their implementation.

**Context and main features**

**National learning goals**

Like many OECD countries, Turkey has changed its student learning goals to focus more on what is most important for student and national success in the 21st century. Over the past decade, Turkey has redefined fundamentally both its expectations of what students should be learning in school, how they should be learning and how their learning should be assessed. This is reflected in legislation and national planning documents for the education sector (see Table 2.2). It is also reflected in the school curriculum, which the government has used as a key lever to effect these changes and to encourage the accompanying transformation in teaching and assessment practices.

Two related theories of teaching and learning have guided Turkey’s curriculum reforms. The first is changing from focusing on knowledge-based to competency-based learning outcomes. This change has included a special emphasis on the development of so-called 21st century, transversal competencies. The second is promoting constructivist pedagogical approaches and recognising the active role students play in the learning process. These two new approaches to teaching and learning were first introduced in the landmark curriculum reforms of 2006 (see Chapter 1) and have informed subsequent policies, including the most recent changes to school curricula made in 2017.
Focusing on competency-based learning

Turkey is seeking to reorient its instruction from a relatively narrow focus on the acquisition of academic content knowledge to a more competency-based approach to better prepare students for active participation in 21st century society. This has been informed by the general direction across OECD and European Union countries, and in particular by the European Commission’s Recommendation on Key Competencies for Lifelong Learning (European Commission, 2006[4]). Such an approach is more demanding of teachers and learners as it requires not only transmitting knowledge but also acquiring a high degree of understanding of information and concepts so they can be applied in different contexts. Schools and school staff, therefore, must change their practices to support this type of approach to learning.

For teachers in all countries, a competency-based curriculum requires that they exercise greater autonomy with respect to what occurs in their classrooms and how they orient their assessments (Ozturk, 2011[5]). For example, relying solely on simple multiple-choice tests is less effective in assessing student competencies, as this type of method does not easily allow students to demonstrate the deep understanding required to use knowledge in varied contexts. Instead, teachers must select and use a more diverse array of assessment techniques, such as extended essays, student portfolios and presentations, to determine student ability, inform their instruction and orient student learning strategies.

Box 2.1. Competencies

In 1997, the OECD initiated the programme *Definition and Selection of Competencies: Theoretical and Conceptual Foundations* (DeSeCo) to develop theoretical and conceptual foundations for defining and selecting competencies. DeSeCo offered the following definitions to guide the future development of competency-based education (Rychen and Salganik, 2000[6]):

- **Knowledge** is facts or ideas acquired by study, investigation, observation or experience and refers to a body of information that is understood.
- **Skills** are the ability to use one’s knowledge with relative ease to perform relatively simple tasks.
- **Competence** is broader than just knowledge and skills. It involves the ability to meet complex demands by drawing on and mobilising resources (including knowledge, skills and attitudes) in a particular context. For example, the ability to communicate effectively is a competency that may draw on an individual’s knowledge of language, practical technology skills and attitudes towards those with whom he or she is communicating (OECD, 2005[7]).

The line between knowledge, skill and competency is not always clear. Particularly in colloquial language, the three terms might even be used interchangeably. Nevertheless, the conceptual differences between the terms are real, especially with respect to competency as it is regarded as being more composite and complex than knowledge and skills.
Finally, the conversation around competencies and competency-based education is constantly evolving. The OECD Education 2030 project (http://www.oecd.org/education/2030/), for example, aims to build upon the work of DeSeCo and help countries examine the curriculum changes that will be needed to help students succeed. It, too, stresses that competencies are an integration of knowledge and skills, but suggests that competencies also incorporate attitudes and values (OECD, 2018[8]).


Emphasising transversal, 21st century competencies

A particular type of competency, termed 21st century competencies by the OECD and many experts (Ananiadou and Claro, 2009[9]; Voogt and Roblin, 2012[10]; Barron and Darling-Hammond, 2008[11]), was recognised in Turkey’s 2006 education reforms and given stronger emphasis in the 2017 reforms. These are competencies and skills that young people in Turkey and around the world need in order to participate fully in 21st century economies. While countries emphasise different types of 21st century competencies, variations of critical thinking, creativity and communication are some of the most common (Ananiadou and Claro, 2009[9]).

An important feature of 21st century competencies is that they are transversal, meaning they are not limited to being taught and developed within a single subject (Voogt and Roblin, 2012[10]). A competency such as creativity, for example, does not typically have a subject dedicated to it but must be reinforced across a range of different subjects ranging from languages to mathematics and arts. Turkish educators across subjects, therefore, must be aligned with respect to their focus on 21st century competencies. Furthermore, materials must be consistent in emphasising 21st century competencies, as well as provide guidance to teachers in how to develop these competencies (see Chapter 3).

Adopting a constructivist pedagogical approach

Constructivism is a pedagogical approach that, in contrast to traditional, behaviourist approaches, suggests that individuals learn by creating understanding for themselves, often in collaboration with others, instead of having facts merely transferred to them (Henson, 2006[12]). For instance, an instructor-centred approach might teach a scientific concept as a piece of knowledge that can be recalled. A constructivist, learner-centred approach might ask a group of students to design and conduct an experiment and then talk to each other about the concept that they observe. In this manner, individuals learn by creating their own understanding and reinforce their understanding by explaining it to others. The focus is on the process of learning, which is guided by inquiry and general questions, as opposed to sequences of factual milestones (Brooks and Brooks, 1999[13]; Seyyedrezaie and Barani, 2013[14]). Table 2.1 illustrates some of the differences between traditional and constructivist classrooms.
Table 2.1. A traditional classroom versus a constructivist classroom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional classroom</th>
<th>Constructivist classroom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum begins with the parts of the whole</td>
<td>Curriculum emphasises big concepts, beginning with the whole and expanding to include the parts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasises basic skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strict adherence to fixed curriculum is highly valued</td>
<td>Pursuit of student questions and interests is valued</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials are primarily textbooks and workbook</td>
<td>Materials include primary sources of material and manipulative materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning is based on repetition</td>
<td>Learning is interactive, building on what the student already knows.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers disseminate information to students; students are</td>
<td>Teachers have a dialogue with students, helping students construct their own knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>recipients of knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher's role is directive, rooted in authority</td>
<td>Teacher's role is interactive, rooted in negotiation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment is through testing, correct answers</td>
<td>Assessment includes student works, observations, and points of view, as well as tests. Process is as important as product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge is seen as inert</td>
<td>Knowledge is seen as dynamic, ever-changing with our experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students work primarily alone</td>
<td>Students work primarily in groups</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Challenges in implementation

While the direction of the curriculum reforms is generally regarded as positive, there is considerable evidence that the intended changes have not fully taken effect in Turkish classrooms. National research (Topcu, 2014[11]) and OECD interviews signal that teaching and learning processes remain focused on knowledge memorisation instead of competency development. In addition, while data from the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) suggests that teachers are trying to change their classroom practices to engage students more actively in the learning process, there are indications that this is not being done in a way that is fully effective. In particular, teachers report a limited understanding of the types of formative techniques that generate student feedback and enable enquiry-led learning (Chapter 3) (OECD, 2016[16]).

Several factors might explain why the intent of over a decade of curriculum reforms is not well reflected in Turkish classrooms. Teacher capacity (see Chapter 3) and national examinations (see Chapter 4) both influence how and to what extent teachers integrate the curriculum into their own classroom practices. Another reason is that the curriculum itself, which should orient teaching and learning practice, is sometimes unclear and inconsistent with respect to the national learning expectations (see Policy issue 2.1).

The curriculum could more clearly support a constructivist approach

Teachers and education officials who met with the OECD review team explained that many educators are unsure what is meant by a constructivist pedagogical approach, reflecting the fact that it is not explicitly explained in curriculum documentation. An analysis of the English language curricula for Grades 2 to 8 and 9 to 12 carried out as part of this review found that, while constructivist principles were mentioned, such as authentic assessment and project-based learning, these were not explicitly linked to a constructivist approach. In fact, the word “constructivism” does not appear in either grade-level English curriculum. Not explicitly mentioning constructivism likely exacerbates educators’ confusion around the definition of constructivism and what it entails for their practices.
Furthermore, there are some discrepancies within the curriculum related to how it supports the national learning goals. Although the curriculum generally encourages competency-based learning and constructivist pedagogy, some elements still focus heavily on the acquisition of discrete knowledge and behaviourist pedagogy. For instance, one outcome from the 2017 Grade 9 English curriculum reads: “Students will be able to scan a text for specific information”. While the outcome itself expects students to perform a task, the expected task is very narrowly defined and assessment of this outcome would not allow students to demonstrate greater mastery of English. An outcome more closely aligned with competency-based learning and a constructivist approach might expect students to decide for themselves what the most important parts of the text are and justify why those pieces are the most critical.

Curricula are divided into domains and levels

Turkey’s curricula for general education (Anatolian schools) are divided into domains (e.g. mathematics or science) and then into levels (e.g. Grades 1 through 5 or Grades 9 through 12). This type of configuration is useful for creating contextually relevant education, but it risks generating systematic incoherence in which each curriculum loses sight of national, common learning goals. In this case, what occurs in classrooms, drawn from different curricula materials, might be different from what is envisioned because there is no single curriculum framework that consistently communicates what the intended, national learning expectations are.

This can also make it more difficult to ensure that a coherent vision and direction underpins successive curriculum reforms. In Turkey, curriculum reform has been ongoing since 2006. While these revisions have aimed to simplify and clarify the curriculum, particularly the 2017 revisions, the absence of a unifying curriculum framework can make it difficult to ensure that the reforms follow a consistent direction. Furthermore, many general directorates are involved in the development of the curriculum. While the Board of Education co-ordinates these efforts and authorises the final curriculum, because there is not an overall curriculum framework, it does not have the means to ensure consistency across all subject curricula.

Curricula need clearer learning standards

Turkish curricula have well-defined learning outcomes and what an annual plan developed by a committee of subject teachers at the beginning of the academic year. However, outcomes are not the same as standards. Learning standards are definitions of what a student should know and/or be able to do to be considered competent in a domain or a field. They also act as measures and benchmarks and can, therefore, be used to assess if what was intended to be learned through the curriculum has actually been learned by students (CEPPE, Chile, 201317). Standards can aid teachers’ pedagogy as they can help teachers visualise what the results of their instruction should be, leading to more accurate assessment, better-informed instruction and, ultimately, improved student learning. While standards share similarities with outcomes, there are notable differences between them, in particular with respect to orienting classroom assessments (Box 2.2).
Box 2.2. Learning outcomes and standards

Outcomes refer to expectations of student performance as they relate to a unit or lesson. While consistent in the curriculum, they might change at the classroom-level as teachers develop lesson plans that are adapted for their students. Standards, on the other hand, represent expectations of student performance at a higher level, such as at the end of each grade or at the conclusion of a level schooling (e.g. primary or upper secondary). They do not change across classrooms and are uniformly applicable to all relevant students. Resources from the New Zealand education system help illustrate this difference.

A unit plan from the mathematics domain for upper primary students is about shopping for a car (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2017[18]). It lists five learning outcomes.

Students will be able to:
- Identify costs associated with purchasing a car.
- Research, analyse and evaluate different car prices, insurance options, and on road costs.
- Present information regarding these car choices and discuss the decision they made.
- Operate within a budget.
- Evaluate the success of the task.

These outcomes are specifically written for a unit about car shopping and would not be applicable to other units. Nevertheless, these outcomes might read slightly differently in an environment in which cars are not available. The teacher might adapt the unit such that students are asked to shop for motorcycles or bicycles, which would require modification of the outcomes.

Compare these outcomes to the associated New Zealand mathematics standards at the end of this same level of education. In contexts that require them to solve problems or model situations, students will be able to:
- Apply additive and multiplicative strategies flexibly to whole numbers, ratios, and equivalent fractions (including percentages).
- Apply additive strategies to decimals.
- Balance positive and negative amounts.
- Find and represent relationships in spatial and number patterns, using tables and graphs as well as apply general rules for linear relationships.

Unlike the learning outcomes from the car shopping unit, these standards represent more general expectations of student capabilities. Not only the car shopping unit, but all other units taught in mathematics classes would be expected to develop student capacity in alignment with this standard.

Assessing these learning standards would be broader in scope than assessing the outcomes of the car shopping lesson. For example, with respect to assessing the standards, students would have to demonstrate a strong understanding of balancing negative and positive amounts and be able to use that knowledge in several different contexts. With respect to assessing the outcomes, however, students would only have to compare and evaluate the prices of different vehicles from the lesson.

Without clearly defined national learning standards, Turkish educators lack criteria against which to formatively assess their students and improve their instruction of those students. Additionally, because learning standards are linked to the competencies expressed in the curriculum, they act as another tool to help align classroom activities with national learning goals. In the absence of clear learning standards, aligning what occurs in classrooms with what the government intends becomes more challenging.

*Parents pay considerable attention to students’ performance in national examinations*

From an international perspective, one of the main obstacles in changing learning goals and practices is system inertia (Bialik and Fadel, 2017[19]). Often, teachers and schools are not convinced by the rationale for change, do not realise that the change required is quite profound as opposed to surface-level and are not confident that new approaches will be effective or are applicable to them. All of these conditions can prevent change from being realised. With respect to curriculum reform, one of the biggest challenges that many countries encounter is the ingrained, societal emphasis on examinations results (Dello-Iacovo, 2009[20]; Berry, 2011[21]). Teachers and schools feel pressured to focus their attention on these, rather than promoting the learning goals and approaches of the curriculum.

In Turkey, many families attach considerable importance to achieving a high mark on national examinations. In the past, many students attended private tutoring, foregoing social, cultural and family activities (Karabacak, 2013[22]). Teachers also told the OECD review team that they feel pressured by families to help students succeed on the examinations instead of continuing to follow the curriculum. More national policies could be developed to build support among parents and society for the new approach to learning and help change these expectations which can contribute to system inertia.

Preparing Turkish society to embrace broad changes in learning outcomes, such as those envisioned by the curriculum, will require a considerable investment of resources and outreach. MoNE, as part of the Vision 2023, currently runs a media campaign to inform the society of the new initiatives to improve the learning outcomes. In other countries, resources have been invested in creating media campaigns to make more visible the desired changes and establishing national education days that showcase successfully realised changes at the school level. These initiatives have helped to overcome system inertia and facilitate a change in the approach to teaching and learning.

**Policy issues**

After over a decade of reform, the learning goals in Turkey’s curriculum are still not fully reflected in the country’s classrooms. The review team’s interviews with teachers and policymakers revealed that a key concern nationally is that many teachers do not fully understand the implications of a competency-based education and constructivist pedagogy for their classroom practice, which is holding back improvement in teaching, learning and assessment practices. To help embed the curriculum’s vision for learning into schools, this review makes recommendations for how the curriculum can communicate its learning goals more effectively. This is essential for reliable and valid assessment practices because it shapes the learning outcomes that teachers aim to measure via assessment. First, a curriculum framework should be developed to provide a single and overarching explanation of the country’s learning goals which can guide future curriculum revisions, in particular, to ensure coherence across domain curricula. Another immediate priority, to
support the implementation of the 2017 curriculum, will be developing learning standards to help teachers understand what students are expected to know and be able to do, which will inform their assessment practice. Finally, national communication and support will be critical to ensure that the profound change in the teaching and learning envisaged by the curriculum reach Turkey’s schools and society in general.

**Policy issue 2.1. Developing a curriculum framework to give greater coherence and clarity to national learning goals**

A lack of understanding of the curriculum is one factor in Turkey that is holding back schools and teachers from adopting a more competency-based, student-centred approach to learning and assessment. While greater support and training will help educators to better understand national learning goals, the curriculum itself can also be more clearly articulated.

The OECD review team was told that multiple revisions of the curriculum over the last decade have made its rationale difficult to determine. Moreover, while involving individual agencies in curricula development means that they can contribute their specific competency in the domain or level of education, it also risks creating misalignment across domain-level curricula. It is therefore important to make more explicit and understandable the vision of teaching and learning that underpins the curricula. This would help educators develop more effective teaching and assessment practices and help designers of subject curricula ensure that these are coherent with each other and national learning objectives. Students would then undergo a more cohesive educational experience, ultimately leading to improved learning outcomes.

**Recommendation 2.1.1. Develop a unifying national curriculum framework**

One way to improve the clarity of curricula is by creating a unifying national curriculum framework to accompany subject-level curricula, in which the learning goals of the Turkish education system are explicitly identified and the principles that guide instruction are carefully explained (International Bureau of Education, 2013[23]). A curriculum framework is a single document that applies to all types and levels of education and unites subsidiary curriculum materials around common objectives (Box 2.3). It is generally used across different countries to serve two purposes:

1. Identify and explain learning goals as they relate to the future of the country.
2. Direct the technical development of other curriculum documents, such as materials for individual domains.

In the Turkish context, developing a curriculum framework to accompany existing curricula would be particularly helpful in explaining the learning vision for the country, especially with respect to the constructivist approach to teaching and assessment. This vision, and the aims and principles that underpin it, can then be incorporated into future revisions of domain-level curricula, which would act as primary education resources for schools and educators. Within the scope of MoNE’s Education Vision 2023, MoNE began to update the school curricula to ensure consistency across different subjects and levels. Furthermore, because the new reforms have placed particular emphasis on developing 21st century competencies, a curriculum framework can help all teachers understand what these competencies are and how they can be integrated into their teaching and assessment.
### Box 2.3. Curriculum frameworks

The table below provides broad guidelines about what is usually found in a national curriculum framework.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Introduction: Current context</td>
<td>Describes the social and economic environment in which teaching and learning occur.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Educational policy statements</td>
<td>Describes the government’s goals for education, such as universal literacy and numeracy, the development of skills needed for economic development and the creation of a stable and tolerant society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Statement of broad learning objectives and outcomes/standards for each level/cycle</td>
<td>Describes what students should know and be able to achieve when they complete their school education. Outcomes should be expressed through a range of domains, including knowledge, understanding, skills and competency.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 4. Structure of the education system | Describes the school system within which the curriculum framework is to be applied. It should specify:  
  ● Number of years of schooling, including compulsory schooling.  
  ● Stages (or cycles) of schooling and their duration.  
  ● Number of weeks in the school year and teaching hours in the school week. |
| 5. Structure of curriculum content, learning areas and subjects | Describes the organisation of content within the framework and the extent to which schools and students can make choices. It might describe:  
  ● An outline of subjects or learning areas to be studied in each stage or cycle (such as core, elective and optional subjects).  
  ● A brief description of each subject or learning area, outlining the rationale for its inclusion in the curriculum and the contribution it makes to the achievement of the learning outcomes defined in Section 3.  
  ● The number of hours to be assigned to each subject or learning area in each stage or cycle. |
| 6. Standards of resources required for implementation | Describes standards as they apply to:  
  ● Teachers – qualifications, teaching load (number of classes per week).  
  ● Students – number per class in each subject.  
  ● Materials – textbooks, computers, other equipment, facilities – classrooms, furniture, supplies. |
| 7. Teaching methodology | Describes the range of teaching approaches that might be employed in the implementation of the framework. |
| 8. Assessing student achievement | Describes the importance of assessing the extent to which students achieve the outcomes of each subject and recommends or prescribes modes of assessment (such as written or oral examinations, performance and practical-skill demonstrations). |

Examples of curriculum frameworks from around the world can be found through the links below.


Articulate the overall learning goals in a vision statement

A country’s vision statement expresses, in broad terms, what the results of a successful education system might look like (International Bureau of Education, 2013[23]). Creating a vision statement is important because it acts as a consistent guide for the development and use of educational content, pedagogy and assessment practices (Donaldson, 2015[24]). Without a coherent vision statement, subsequent curriculum materials and educational and assessment activities will not share a common point of reference and risk falling out of alignment with each other, thus negatively impacting student learning. Several countries around the world have developed such vision statements with the aim of guiding and aligning their education systems (Box 2.4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 2.4. Examples of learner-centred vision statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Singapore</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The person who is schooled in the Singapore Education system embodies the Desired Outcomes of Education. He has a good sense of self-awareness, a sound moral compass, and the necessary skills and knowledge to take on challenges of the future. He is responsible for his family, community and nation. He appreciates the beauty of the world around him, possesses a healthy mind and body, and has a zest for life. In sum, he is:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- a confident person who has a strong sense of right and wrong, is adaptable and resilient, knows himself, is discerning in judgment, thinks independently and critically, and communicates effectively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- a self-directed learner who takes responsibility for his own learning, who questions, reflects and perseveres in the pursuit of learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- an active contributor who is able to work effectively in teams, exercises initiative, takes calculated risks, is innovative and strives for excellence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- a concerned citizen who is rooted to Singapore has a strong civic consciousness, is informed, and takes an active role in bettering the lives of others around him.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wales</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All our children and young people will be…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- ambitious, capable learners who are ready to learn throughout their lives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- enterprising, creative contributors who are ready to play a full part in life and work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- ethical, informed citizens who are ready to be citizens of the world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- healthy, confident individuals who are ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


New Zealand

Our vision is for young people:

- who will be creative, energetic, and enterprising
- who will seize the opportunities offered by new knowledge and technologies to secure a sustainable social, cultural, economic, and environmental future for our country
- who will work to create an Aotearoa New Zealand in which Māori and Pākehā recognise each other as full Treaty partners, and in which all cultures are valued for the contributions they bring
- who, in their school years, will continue to develop the values, knowledge, and competencies that will enable them to live full and satisfying lives
- who will be confident, connected, actively involved, and lifelong learners.


Turkey does not have a single vision statement but instead relies on a variety of national documents to broadly define the goals of its education system. For example, national legislation, the Tenth Development Plan (2014–18) and the Ministry of National Education’s (MoNE) Strategic Plan (2015–19) all contain references to the learning goals of the country (Table 2.2).

Table 2.2. Broad education goals expressed by different national documents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document</th>
<th>Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Legislation (Basic Law of National Education)</td>
<td>The general objective of the Turkish National Education is to train all members of the Turkish Nation as citizens who [...] endorse, protect and develop the national, moral, humanitarian, spiritual and cultural values of the nation [...] balanced and [have a] healthy manner physically, mentally, ethically, spiritually and emotionally [...] have a wide perspective of the world, respect human rights, value individuality and entrepreneurship and feel responsible towards the society; and who are constructive, creative and industrious [...] enable them to gain the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for their future lives and for the acquisition of a profession which would ensure their prosperity and continue to that of the country [...].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development Plan (2014–18)</td>
<td>The main goal of the education system is to raise happy and productive individuals who have advanced thinking, perception and problem-solving skills; have a sense of self-confidence, responsibility, entrepreneurship and innovation; have internalised democratic and national values; have a strong sense of arts and aesthetics; are open to communication and communication; are capable of using and developing technology and are equipped with the qualifications necessitated by the information society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MoNE Strategic Plan (2015–19)</td>
<td>To improve critical thinking, reading comprehension, research and problem solving skills; to provide the necessary information and skills as required by knowledge-based society; To internalise universal values of democracy and humanity within the national culture; to be able to establish open communication and to improve students’ sensitivity and artistic skills; to bring up children who are diligent, creative, innovative, peaceful, healthy and happy; to raise consciousness about self-confidence, self-respect, rights, fairness and responsibilities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: (MoNE, 1973[28]), Turkish Basic Law of National Education; Ministry of Development (2014[29]), Tenth Development Plan; (MoNE, 2015[30]), Strategic Plan 2015–19.
While there are common priorities expressed by all three documents, for those who are responsible for developing and interpreting curricula, it is difficult to determine which goals should be prioritised.

Crafting a vision statement would unify and make more visible the common expectations that underpin the documents from Table 2.2. Such a statement would co-ordinate subsequent policymaking and curriculum development, ultimately making objectives clearer for teachers and education more cohesive for Turkish students.

To begin creating a vision statement in Turkey, the content from the three national documents could be distilled into four common learning goals, as shown in Table 2.3. These four goals, which represent Turkey’s vision for learning, could then be represented in the vision statement that Turkey crafts for its national curriculum framework. The full process of creating the vision statement could be led by senior leadership from the MoNE, with direct input from the minister in order to create cohesion across educational bodies.

Table 2.3. Common learning goals found in national documents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Well-being</td>
<td>● Healthy manner physically, mentally, ethically, spiritually and emotionally</td>
<td>● Raise up happy and productive individuals</td>
<td>● Healthy and happy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic competitiveness</td>
<td>● Enable them to gain the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for their future lives and for the acquisition of a profession</td>
<td>● Equipped with the qualifications necessitated by the information society</td>
<td>● To provide the necessary information and skills as required by knowledge-based society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture and citizenship</td>
<td>● Protect and develop the national, normal, humanitarian, spiritual and cultural values of the nation</td>
<td>● Internalised democratic and national values</td>
<td>● Internalise universal values of democracy and humanity within the national culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21st century competencies</td>
<td>● A wide perspective of the world</td>
<td>● Problem-solving skills</td>
<td>● Improve critical thinking, research and problem-solving skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Value entrepreneurship</td>
<td>● Entrepreneurship and innovation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Creative</td>
<td>● Open to communion and communication</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● Capable of using and developing technology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The aims of the vision statement would consequently be reflected throughout the education system, from domain-specific curricula to classroom activities including assessments, and educational materials. It would be the anchor that aligns the standards for teacher and school evaluation, to ensure that expectations for teachers and schools encourage the type of teaching and learning students would need to experience to develop in this manner. In particular, the vision statement would direct the construction of learning standards, which would then be used to assess students, thus ensuring that all elements of the system are reinforcing the same learning objectives (see Policy issue 2.2) (OECD, 2013[31]).

*Describe the differences between competency-based and knowledge-based teaching and learning*

Simply changing the language of the curriculum to be more competency-based is not enough to foster understanding of competency-based learning. In the curriculum framework, it would be helpful to also explain the differences between focusing on what students *know* (knowledge-based) and what they *can do* with what they know (competency-based).

Importantly, the explanation of competency-based learning should not only define how it is different from knowledge-based learning, but also describe how these differences would be manifested in school classrooms, particularly in student assessment. Teachers must devise complex assessment tools, including more sophisticated multiple-choice instruments and authentic assessment methods (e.g. student portfolios) (OECD, 2013[31]). Since the curriculum framework is a high-level document, a detailed discussion about classroom activities and assessments can be reserved for individual domain curricula (see Recommendation 2.1.2 and Chapter 3). What is important in the curriculum framework is to ensure that educators and policymakers understand, in general terms, that the change in curriculum will require a change in what occurs in Turkish classrooms.

In addition, it is vital to justify why the changes are occurring. For example, the curriculum framework’s explanation of competency-based learning should include a justification of why Turkey decided to focus on developing students’ competencies. Educators need to understand that modern economies place less value on factual recollection and that they must prepare students for a world in which they can demonstrate not just what they know, but above all what they can do with what they know (Schleicher, 2015[32]). Without understanding the rationale for change, educators might not be convinced of its merit and would be more hesitant to adapt their practices (Fullan, 1992[33]).

*Define and promote transversal, 21st century competencies*

Since 2006, Turkey’s curriculum has included 21st century competencies as an expected learning outcome and the 2017 reform has given these even more prominence. However, evidence collected by the OECD review team suggests that many teachers do not fully understand what is meant by 21st century competencies, which therefore makes it difficult for them to assess these competencies. In interviews with officials and teachers, for example, the OECD review team asked individuals to define 21st century competencies and received different responses from different stakeholders. Moreover, even if clearly understood, 21st century competencies are difficult to assess because they are transversal and not limited to a single domain or class.

To better define and promote 21st century competencies, it is recommended that the curriculum framework provide an explanation of what is meant by 21st century competencies and a list of the most important competencies in the Turkish context.
Furthermore, the curriculum framework would explain clearly and explicitly that the development of 21st century competencies is the responsibility of all teachers, not just teachers from one or two domains. This would establish the expectation that all teachers would incorporate the development of these competencies into their classroom activities and assess their students against these competencies (Ontario Public Service, 2016[34]). This is the practice in most OECD countries, where the promotion of 21st century competencies is integrated regular classroom teaching and assessment (Ananiadou and Claro, 2009[9]).

*Explain constructivist pedagogy and provide examples of its usage*

Given that many educators and policymakers in Turkey are not clear about what is meant by constructivist pedagogy, it would be beneficial to explain the theories that underpin constructivist pedagogy in the curriculum framework. Examples should also be provided of how this approach differs from traditional, behaviourist approaches. These explanations can help ensure that all stakeholders will have the same understanding of constructivism and that subsequent curriculum materials reflect a constructivist approach.

In order to encourage teachers to use constructivist approaches in their own practice, it is important to justify why Turkey decided to move away from a behaviourist, teacher-centred approach and towards a constructivist, learner-centred approach to education. With Turkey’s emphasis on transversal, 21st century competencies, teachers’ pedagogical approaches should be aligned to better develop students’ abilities in these areas. Research shows that traditional, behaviourist approaches are not well suited to developing critical thinking and higher-order skills (Barron and Darling-Hammond, 2008[11]). On the other hand, constructivist approaches, such as inquiry-based teaching and formative assessment techniques, can produce better student outcomes with respect to deeper learning and performing complex tasks (Barron and Darling-Hammond, 2008[11]).

**Recommendation 2.1.2. Use the curriculum framework to guide future revisions of individual domain curricula**

Turkey’s reform efforts have significantly improved the curriculum; nevertheless, further progress can be made, especially alignment between subject-level curricula. Although the Board of Education is responsible for creating coherence across curricula because the individual general directorates develop subject- and grade-level curricula, it can be difficult for the board to ensure this coherence. Given these circumstances, it is difficult to ensure consistency across different subjects and levels and consistently promote the same vision and approach to learning. Teachers can then find it difficult to support student progression and students might receive a less coherent learning experience.

Therefore, after the national curriculum framework has been created, it is recommended that Turkey use this to direct the future development of individual curricula and materials such as textbooks and assessments. Figure 2.1 illustrates the content of the national curriculum framework and summarises the relationship between national goals, the curriculum framework and subject-level curricula.
Figure 2.1. Relationship between national outcomes, curriculum framework and domain-level curricula

Ensure that overall goals are well-represented in future domain-level curricula objectives

The overall goals expressed in the curriculum framework should be represented in all subsequent revisions of curriculum materials. Currently, this alignment is not always occurring. For example, a comparison of the objectives of mathematics and English curricula reveals that the common national education goals found in Table 2.3 are not consistently reflected in these subject-level curricula (MoNE, 2017[35]). In the 2017 English curriculum for Grades 2 to 8, a list of “key competencies” of the curriculum is found. The competencies include four aptitudes identified as “horizontal skills.” These are:

- Learning to learn.
- Social and civic responsibility.
- Initiative and entrepreneurship.
- Cultural awareness and creativity.

Looking at Table 2.3, these competencies would most likely represent culture and citizenship and 21st century competencies. That they are explicitly called “horizontal” indicates awareness that these competencies are transversal in nature.

In the 2017 English curriculum for Grades 9 to 12, no section about key competencies appears, nor does a list of horizontal skills. However, the objectives of the curriculum do emphasise collaboration and learner autonomy, which could be classified as different 21st century competencies that appear in the English curriculum for Grades 2 to 8.

The 2017 mathematics curriculum for Grades 1 to 5 is organised differently. It contains a section about the programme’s vision and another about the programme’s perspective, without an explicit list of key competencies to be acquired. Within the sections about vision and perspective, the curriculum does mention competencies such as problem solving and communication.

Comparing the content of these three domain-level curricula reveals inconsistency within and across domains regarding the integration of Turkey’s overall educational goals. While 21st century competencies, albeit different ones, are represented in all three curricula, culture and citizenship are only represented in one. Well-being and economic competitiveness were not explicitly identified in any of the three curricula.

This inconsistency risks that teachers’ assessment practices might be misaligned with each other and with national learning goals. How teachers teach and assess students, for instance, might be different between a student’s mathematics and science classes. This is particularly important for the development of 21st century competencies, as they require reinforcement in all domains.

To improve alignment across different curricula, the Board of Education should require those responsible for developing the curricula to organise each similarly, with a section dedicated to explicitly listing the competencies that are expected to be acquired in the context of a particular domain. These competencies would reflect the national learning expectations expressed in the curriculum framework. This type of organisation is exemplified by the national curricula of Australia and New Zealand and is designed to improve the consistency of the education that student’s receive (Australian Curriculum, n.d.[36]; New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2007[27]).

**Give stronger emphasis to competency-based learning in future domain-level curricula**

While Turkey has modified its curriculum to be more competency-based, some parts are still focused on the acquisition of knowledge and linear progression through content areas. The 2017 English curriculum for Grades 2 to 8 provides an example of this discrepancy. It is organised according to ten broad themes/units about common environments and situations (e.g. “friendship” and the “Internet”). Each theme is associated with “functions and useful language” (recommended words and phrases to be used in context), learning outcomes and suggested tasks. Figure 2.2 shows an excerpt from the Internet theme in Grade 8. Outcomes are categorised into five skills areas: listening, spoken interaction, spoken production, reading and writing. One outcome for the spoken interaction skill is: “Students will be able to talk about their Internet habits”. This outcome represents competency-based learning because it does not expect students to recall predetermined words or phrases. Rather, it asks students to use what they have learned and apply it in a common life situation.
In contrast, the sole learning outcome for the spoken production skill is: “Students will be able to make excuses, and to accept and refuse offers by using a series of phrases and simple sentences”. In addition to being less related to the unit itself, this outcome is more rigidly defined than the previous one. The language used to describe this outcome might encourage some teachers to interpret the outcome’s intent as expecting students to understand a list of specific excuses and then demonstrate their learning by simply repeating those excuses. Such practice would be more representative of knowledge-based learning.

Furthermore, the annual plans (i.e. expected student outcomes at specific moments during the school year) that are associated with the curricula have been created and provided to teachers to help them implement the curricula. An example of the annual plan associated with the Internet theme of the Grade 8 English curriculum is shown in Figure 2.3. The plan reiterates the same learning outcomes found in the curricula, but accompany those outcomes with the month and week in which those outcomes should be achieved in class. Even the number of hours that should be allocated to each unit is provided. Such a strict and linear progression through the curriculum is prescriptive in nature and aligns more closely with traditional, knowledge-based learning than the type of competency-based learning that Turkey is promoting. The linear progression also makes it harder for teachers to introduce more student-centred pedagogical approaches, such as formative assessment, as teachers feel pressured to follow these specifications rather than adapt to the learning levels and pace of their students. This challenge was highlighted frequently by teachers during the review team’s interviews.

### Figure 2.2. Excerpt from the Annual Plan for 2017 Grade 8 English curriculum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit / Theme</th>
<th>Functions &amp; Useful Language</th>
<th>Language Skills and Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Suggested Contexts, Tasks and Assignments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| The Internet     | Accepting and refusing / Making excuses Would you like to join our WhatsApp group? —Yes, sure! That sounds great. —No, thanks. I am really busy. Why don’t we chat online at two o’clock? I want to tell you something important —I’m sorry, but I can’t. My Internet is broken. What do you mean? Do you mean the Internet connection? —Yes. It isn’t working properly. | Listening  
E&S.1.1. Students will be able to understand the gist of oral texts.  
E&S.1.2. Students will be able to comprehend phrases and related vocabulary items.  
Spoken Interaction  
E&S.5.1. Students will be able to talk about their Internet habits.  
E&S.5.2. Students will be able to exchange information about the Internet.  
Spoken Production  
E&S.5.1. Students will be able to make excuses, and to accept and refuse offers by using a series of phrases and simple sentences.  
Reading  
E&S.5.1. Students will be able to identify main ideas in short and simple texts about Internet habits.  
E&S.5.2. Students will be able to find specific information about the Internet in various texts.  
Writing  
E&S.5.1. Students will be able to write a basic paragraph to describe their Internet habits. | Contexts  
Blogs  
Charts  
Diaries  
Journal Entries  
E-mails  
Illustrations  
Lists  
News  
Reports  
Notes and Memo pads  
Podcasts  
Posters  
Questionnaires  
Songs  
Stories  
Videos  
Websites  
Tasks/Activities  
Drama (Role Play, Simulation, Pantomime)  
Find Someone Who ...  
Games  
Guessing  
Information/Opinion Gap  
Information Transfer  
Labeling  
Matching  
Questions and Answers  
Room-based  
Storytelling  
True/False/No Information  
Assignments  
* Students keep expanding their visual dictionary by including new vocabulary items.  
* Students prepare a poster to illustrate their Internet habits and hang it on the classroom walls. |

Source: MoNE (2017[37]), English Curriculum Teaching Program: Grades 2 to 8.
To improve alignment between Turkey’s learning expectations and classroom activities, it is recommended that future revisions of domain-level curricula reflect more strongly the competency-based learning focus that is expressed in the national curriculum framework. The aforementioned spoken production outcome, for example, could be modified to read: “Students will be able to verbally consider different offers related to the Internet and then refuse or accept the offers based upon his/her deliberations”. The annual plans or “gains” tables should be less prescriptive (e.g. not mandate a certain number of hours per lesson) and instead guide teachers in facilitating student progress towards learning outcomes. Alternatively, they could also be integrated into a set of learning standards that would describe the progression that teachers should expect to see in students as they become stronger in their competencies (see Policy issue 2.2).
Box 2.5. Alignment across curricula, an example from Singapore

Like Turkey, Singapore also disaggregates its curricula by domain and grade level. The common organisation of Singapore’s curricula across domains serves as an example of how Turkey might similarly organise their domain- and grade-level curricula. In Singapore’s primary school mathematics and science curricula (Ministry of Education Singapore, 2018[38]), both documents have an explicit section for the learning goals of the curriculum. The goals of the primary school mathematics curriculum are:

- Acquire mathematical concepts and skills for everyday use and continuous learning in mathematics.
- Develop thinking, reasoning, communication, application and metacognitive skills through a mathematical approach to problem-solving.
- Build confidence and foster interest in mathematics.

The goals of the primary school science curriculum are:

- Provide students with experiences which build on their interest in and stimulate their curiosity about the environment.
- Provide students with basic scientific terms and concepts to help them understand themselves and the world around them.
- Provide students with opportunities to develop skills, habits of mind and attitudes necessary for scientific inquiry.
- Prepare students towards using scientific knowledge and methods in making personal decisions.
- Help students appreciate how science influences people and the environment.

In addition to being structured similarly around goals, the goals themselves of these two curricula demonstrate alignment. Although oriented towards mathematics or science, both sets of goals emphasise skills development (competencies) and strengthening students’ confidence, curiosity and inquiry (student-centred pedagogy).

Further examination of these curricula reveals that they both focus on developing similar, transversal competencies. In both curricula, 21st century competencies are explicitly described and their development strongly encouraged. The mathematics curriculum states:

“The learning of mathematics also provides an excellent vehicle to train the mind, and to develop the capacity to think logically, abstractly, critically and creatively. These are important 21st century competencies that we must imbue in our students, so they can lead a productive life and be life-long learners.”

The science curriculum similarly explains:

“A strong foundation in scientific knowledge and methodologies will include the development of reasoning and analytical skills, decision and problem-solving skills, flexibility to respond to different contexts and possessing an open and inquiring mind that is willing to explore new territories and learn new things. These are skills and habits of mind that are aligned to the desired 21st century competencies.”
By constructing their domain-level curricula in such a similar manner, Singapore ensures that they are aligned and consistent with respect to their goals and on common, transversal competencies.


**Align future domain-level curricula with constructivist approaches**

In addition to reflecting the national focus on competency-based learning, future domain-level curriculum revisions should also be more explicit about how teachers can teach the curriculum content using constructivist methods. As many teachers are experienced with the idea of teaching as a transmission of information, it is important to embed the constructivist approach in all elements of the curriculum (e.g. outcomes, tasks and activities) in order to continuously expose teachers to this new approach and steer them away from more habitual practices. In some cases, however, current curricula do not explicitly promote constructivist pedagogies.

For example, looking again at the “Internet” theme of the Grade 8 English curriculum (Figure 2.2), the tasks and activities that are recommended are unclear about how they should be incorporated into class lessons and what approaches teachers might adopt when doing so. Three of the recommended tasks are “labelling,” “matching” and “questions and answers”. Further guidance is not provided. These activities could be approached from a constructivist perspective. For instance, for “questions and answers”, students could be asked to work together in order to create questions about their Internet habits and develop different answers. In doing so, they would have to research or learn from each other, new vocabulary and ways of expressing themselves. They might then be evaluated through the teacher observing a simulation/improvisation of students interviewing each other.

However, “questions and answers” could also be approached from a more traditional, behaviourist perspective. Teachers could create a list of Internet-related vocabulary that students are asked to memorise individually. Students might be assessed through a multiple-choice quiz, or through being asked specific questions to which they are expected to deliver pre-selected, correct responses.

Without explicit encouragement, teachers might interpret the tasks and activities in the curriculum in the manner illustrated by the second example simply because they are more familiar with that type of pedagogy. Future curriculum revisions, therefore, should be more specific, explicit and clear about what teachers are expected to do in their classrooms to engage students in active learning. Instead of tasks and activities that are expressed with two or three words, and are thus open to interpretation, detailed examples of proposed classroom activities that are aligned with constructivist approaches would be provided. Teachers would then not have to interpret an activity and try to make it constructivist, which they might not feel prepared to do, but would rely on using a collection of activities that are already constructivist in approach. In addition to examples appearing in the curricula themselves, separate materials could be given to teachers and schools that would provide further detailed guidance and examples of teaching from a constructivist approach (see Chapter 3).
Policy issue 2.2. Developing learning standards to help teachers understand what students are expected to know and be able to do

Learning standards illustrate what students are expected to be able to do. Clearly defined standards can inform the development of more effective and valid assessments, the results of which can then be used formatively by teachers to improve the learning of their students. Countries that have developed national learning standards include Australia, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Luxembourg, Norway, the United Kingdom and the United States (OECD, 2013[31]). Learning standards are composed of a definition of achievement and different levels of aptitude (Kleinhenz and Ingvarson, 2007[39]). Figure 2.4 illustrates the relationship between complete learning standards, domain/grade level curricula and assessment.

Figure 2.4. Relationship between learning standards, curriculum and assessment


Recommendation 2.2.1. Develop learning standards

Turkey’s curriculum features learning outcomes, but not necessarily learning standards (see Box 2.2). Without clear learning standards, Turkish educators will have difficulty understanding what exactly is to be assessed in their classrooms. They would not know how to categorise different levels of student proficiency and, therefore, would be less able to adapt their teaching to their students’ individual abilities.

Establish standards with performance levels in core subjects

Learning standards first define what should be learned and what students should be capable of doing in a given subject by grade or level, particularly in core subjects. In the context of a competency-based curriculum such as Turkey’s, standards are typically constructed to
depict what students should be capable of doing. They are also framed in a way that captures the integration of knowledge and skills (Box 2.6).

**Box 2.6. Excerpts of standards from the United States Common Core**

The United States organises its standards into domains and then grade levels. The OECD recommends that Turkey also organises its standards similarly as the country’s curriculum is already configured in the same manner. Below are the Grade 5 standards for mathematics from the United States Common Core Standards.

**Operations and Algebraic Thinking**
- Write and interpret numerical expressions.
- Analyse patterns and relationships.

**Number and Operations in Base Ten**
- Understand the place value system.
- Perform operations with multi-digit whole numbers and with decimals to hundredths.

**Number and Operations-Fractions**
- Use equivalent fractions as a strategy to add and subtract fractions.
- Apply and extend previous understandings of multiplication and division to multiply and divide fractions.

**Measurement and Data**
- Convert like measurement units within a given measurement system.
- Represent and interpret data.
- Geometric measurement: understand concepts of volume and relate volume to multiplication and to addition.

**Geometry**
- Graph points on the co-ordinate plane to solve real-world and mathematical problems.
- Classify two-dimensional figures into categories based on their properties.


In developing its own learning standards for core subjects, it will be important that Turkey ensures that the standards are aligned with the overall educational goals expressed in the curriculum framework, though from the perspective of each domain. For instance, one overall goal is the development of 21st century competencies, such as creativity, which is identified in two documents from Table 2.3. As a transversal competency, it would be the responsibility of all domains to support this overall goal, and therefore the standards of each domain should reflect a focus on 21st century competencies.
The second step in developing learning standards is creating levels of performance, in which the competencies that are identified by the standards are also associated with different levels of aptitude (e.g. basic, proficient and advanced). The descriptions of these levels can then be used later to assess the amount of progress a student has made in a particular competency, and not just whether the student can or cannot perform the specified tasks. Box 2.7 shows an example of a learning standard that accommodates a range of student performance.

**Box 2.7. “Working mathematically” learning standard from New South Wales, Australia**

New South Wales, Australia divides its curriculum into different domain areas, which are further categorised into competencies. Each competency is associated with a content standard, which is disaggregated into three levels according to education stages, or levels of schooling. The following example comes from “working mathematically” competency of the mathematics domain.

Standard: Develop understanding and fluency in mathematics through inquiry, exploring and connecting mathematical concepts, choosing and applying problem-solving skills and mathematical techniques, communication and reasoning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Stage 1</th>
<th>Stage 2</th>
<th>Stage 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Describes mathematical situations using every day and some mathematical language, actions, materials, diagrams and symbols.</td>
<td>Uses appropriate terminology to describe and symbols to represent mathematical ideas.</td>
<td>Describes and represents mathematical situations in a variety of ways using mathematical terminology and some conventions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>Uses objects, diagrams and technology to explore mathematical problems.</td>
<td>Selects and uses appropriate mental or written strategies, or technology, to solve problems.</td>
<td>Selects and applies appropriate problem-solving strategies, including in the use of digital technologies, in undertaking investigations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>Supports conclusions by explaining or demonstrating how answers were obtained.</td>
<td>Checks the accuracy of a statement and explains the reasoning used.</td>
<td>Gives a valid reason for supporting one possible solution over another.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Creating performance levels would benefit student learning in Turkey by helping teachers adapt their instruction and assessment to students’ different current levels of competency. For example, if asked to solve a problem, a student might be able to solve some of the problem but not all of it or demonstrate a correct approach to solving the problem but ultimately arrive at an incorrect answer. Assessments need to be able to determine and report these types of nuances in student performance, and teachers need to be able to adapt their instruction to accommodate these identified differences. Research shows that successfully differentiating students’ education in this manner can lead to improved student outcomes (Dumont et al., 2010[42]).
Furthermore, establishing learning standards would help modernise and synchronise Turkey’s central and classroom assessment procedures (see Chapter 3). Examinations developers would be encouraged to design assessments that are aligned with learning standards that are competency-based. The developers, therefore, would be encouraged to expand the repertoire of test items to incorporate more suitable formats, such as short-answer and open-ended items, rather than relying on simple multiple-choice items. At the classroom level, teachers’ assessment methodology would become more consistent as they, too, would change their activities to be more aligned with the learning standards.

**Develop learning standards around grade levels**

As Turkey’s curricula are currently organised into grade-level units, it would be advisable to also develop learning standards for each grade. Each unit would retain its outcomes, but these outcomes would support the standards affiliated with their respective domain and grade. Through this approach, the individual units that comprise a grade’s curriculum would be consistently aligned with each other and the learning standard of the grade.

It is important to note that levels of performance are determined independently of a student’s grade (though advancement through grades should be associated with achieving minimum standards). A student can be in Grade 8 but demonstrate a lower level of performance in a particular competency than a student in Grade 6. This arrangement is more constructive because it allows teachers to properly identify a student’s current level of competency, particularly if a student is struggling, and adapt instruction for that student.

To better understand the relationship between performance levels and grades, it is helpful to think of levels of performance as being able to span multiple grades, as illustrated in Figure 2.5. New Zealand’s standards are provided as an example because it is a country that also organises students by grades and standards by different levels.

Turkey’s performance levels would be conceptualised similarly. By classifying students according to performance level and grade, teachers can better adapt their instruction according to their students’ needs. This is particularly important in Turkey, as grade repetition is very rare until Grade 8 and students move through three types of schools (see Chapter 3). A teacher who receives a new student, for example, would be able to tailor his/her teaching to that student’s performance level, ensuring the continuity of that student’s education and maximising his/her time spent in school.
Support the use of standards

The key role of learning standards is to act as a consistent point of reference such that illustrate what exactly should be assessed. Educators will require support as they begin to use newly created standards in their schools and classrooms. The amount of resources that would be needed would be substantial as using standards in lesson planning and assessment represents a significant change. Chapter 3 reviews how Turkey can align learning standards and classroom practices while Policy issue 2.3 explores how to gain support for reforms.

Another method of encouraging the use of standards would be to ensure that they guide the development and reporting of national assessments. In particular, performing analysis on individual items that are based on the standards would act as an example to teachers of how standards can be used in assessment (see Chapter 4). The standards should also be used to guide the wider evaluation system – teacher appraisal and school evaluation – so that teachers and schools are expected and supported to embed the learning standards in classroom instruction (see Chapter 5).
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Policy issue 2.3. Communicating national learning goals to society to build trust and support for change

The change in teaching and learning that is envisaged by Turkey’s learning goals is profound. Creating a curriculum framework and learning standards are effective methods of articulating and clarifying the intended changes, but those changes still need to be effected and sustained in Turkish schools.

Research shows that education and curriculum reforms can fail to succeed because government goals are ambitiously conceptualised but are not always accompanied by strong communication and implementation plans (Havelock and Huberman, 1977[43]; Fullan, 1992[33]). Changing something as integral as teaching and learning, for example, tends to encounter significant system inertia as individuals who are affected might be unclear about why they should change their developed behaviour (Burns and Köster, 2016[44]). In cases such as these, defining the desired change is not enough; it is also necessary to plan and invest in how to realise the changes that are desired (Levin, 2010[45]).

In the Turkish context, considering the implementation of reforms is particularly important. The progressive, learner-centred approach that the government aims to achieve is not reflected in all the country’s classrooms. Recurrent curriculum reforms have also created some “change fatigue” among Turkish educators, making it even harder for them to commit to the latest iteration (Bernerth, Walker and Harris, 2011[46]; Dilkes et al., 2014[47]). Finally, Turkey’s societal focus on examinations, which carry high stakes with respect to future opportunities, is very strong. The OECD review team was told by teachers and school leaders that they feel pressure from parents to prepare students for examinations at the expense of following the curriculum. Even in primary school, teachers said that they felt pressured to train students in multiple-choice tests and provide parents with summative evaluations of their students’ performance in these, rather than against the full breadth of the curriculum.

Recent changes to the high school placement system – ending the compulsory examination and making student placement for most students based on geographic area – aim to reduce the national focus and pressure on examinations (see Chapter 4). However, in order to achieve the desired transformation in teaching and learning, Turkey will also need to take direct action in order to overcome system inertia and change fatigue. This would entail making the case for change and making more visible and accessible, the goals that Turkey is working towards. Furthermore, it will be necessary to create mechanisms to support schools as they implement the curriculum and confront societal pressure to focus more on examinations.

Recommendation 2.3.1. Make national learning goals more visible

Analyses of the landmark 2006 curriculum reform suggest that while the direction of the change was positive and aligned with international trends (OECD, 2007[48]), it was also executed quickly without sufficient consultation and piloting before its release (Aksit, 2007[49]) or communication and promotion afterwards (Demirtas and Erdem, 2015[50]). In contrast, the 2017 curriculum reform has focused heavily on receiving consultations during its development and communications after its release. For example, the OECD review team was told that piloting of the new curriculum was widespread and that teachers from the pilot schools were invited to workshops to provide their feedback. Furthermore, the curriculum was also released online for public consultation before the final version was published.
Despite these positive developments in consultation and outreach, Turkey’s national learning goals, based on competency-based learning and constructivist pedagogy, are still not widely understood. From teachers, schools and policymakers, the OECD review team heard very different interpretations of the current direction of curriculum reform and widespread inconsistency in what is meant by key principles, such as competencies and constructivism. Recent research confirms this, revealing limited understanding on the part of teachers of core pedagogical techniques emphasised in the curriculum, such as formative assessment (Kan, 2017[23]). There has been little research on parental and broader societal responses to curriculum reform in Turkey, though it might be inferred that if teachers and schools do not understand the intended changes then public comprehension would be lower still. None of the parents interviewed by the review team, for instance, seemed aware of the recent 2017 reforms.

To realise Turkey’s vision of learning, therefore, it is necessary for the government to communicate to stakeholders what the vision entails and why it is important (Fullan, 2006[51]). This requires more technical guidance to teachers and schools on how to introduce and assess the curriculum, as well as changing the standards used to define and evaluate the quality of teaching and schooling. Chapters 3 and 5 of this report provide recommendations of how this might be done.

It is also important to proactively build momentum and capacity for reform, not only to address system inertia but also to mitigate the risk of fatigue and frustration after over a decade of curriculum change (Fullan, 1992[33]). Turkish society needs to better understand Turkey’s learning goals so schools and teachers feel supported and trusted by their communities when they introduce changes. Creating a national communications campaign around Turkey’s learning goals and making visible successful examples of change could help build this understanding.

**Build a national communications campaign**

A critical element of building understanding and support around educational reform is explaining the rationale for the change. Experts have noted that reforms, such as curriculum revision, are frequently met with scepticism by individuals whose roles are affected by the desired change (Burgess, Robertson and Patterson, 2010[52]). Thus, the justification for change needs to be carefully considered and effectively communicated in addition to the content of the change (Ngjeng’ere Kabita and Ji, 2017[53]).

To strengthen communications around curriculum reform, countries and economies invest significant resources in preparing the public for the change (OECD, 2011[54]). For example, education officials in Hong Kong (China) formed a close relationship with their local media representatives. In the early stages of designing the new curriculum, Hong Kong (China) education leaders held seminars for reporters to clarify why the reform was occurring. Chief editors of major media outlets were also enlisted and asked to help engage the public by transmitting messages about the intended changes to the curriculum (OECD, 2011[54]). Mexico is currently unveiling its new curriculum as part its Nuevo Modelo Educativo movement. To communicate the reforms, the Mexican government has created a comprehensive website with a wide collection of informative videos that help explain the changes (https://www.gob.mx/nuevomodeloeducativo). These international examples illustrate how government communications can be leveraged to engage the public and build understanding around curriculum reforms.

Turkey is experienced with successfully using education media campaigns and can utilise best practices from those cases to communicate the country’s learning goals, as already
begun under 2023 Vision. For example, the “Father, Send Me to School” campaign positively influenced the general opinion about girls’ education. The campaign produced several advertisements that explained the importance of girls’ education from the perspective of responsible citizenship and economic interests. Many of these are now available on websites such as YouTube and have received hundreds of thousands of views (Dogan Group, n.d. [55]). Similar techniques can be employed to promote Turkey’s approach to teaching and learning to educators and community members.

**Showcase examples of successful changes**

While top-down approaches can be effective in building understanding, research has shown that equally, if not more important, is horizontal interaction in which schools act as models for each other (Greany, 2017 [56]). Seeing how reform is implemented successfully in an institutional context can help the public better visualise and understand the reform, and help educators implement the same policy in their own schools (Fullan, 2006 [51]; Fullan, 2004 [57]). In Turkey, seeing successful examples of change would also help build confidence among teachers and school leaders that they can realise the exemplified change and help them avoid change fatigue.

From an international perspective, to help illustrate student-centred learning in classrooms, Shanghai (China) education leaders produced videos of what is considered model teaching with one camera focused on the teacher and another on students. The videos were then disseminated to other teachers around the city (OECD, 2011 [54]). To showcase school-level success, Colombia has created a Day of Educational Excellence (now called “E Day”) to celebrate schools that demonstrate outstanding practices and performance (Colombian Ministry of Education, 2010 [58]).

In Turkey, the OECD review team visited several schools that had successfully embraced and implemented the curriculum. It would be helpful for these schools to be publicised as representatives of Turkey’s learning goals so community members can visualise and better understand what is expected, leading to greater support of those expectations. Such promotion can be done nationally, but also provincially, in order to illustrate that Turkey’s vision can be realised not only in a small number of well-resourced schools but also in more rural and isolated areas of the country.

**Recommendation 2.3.2. Expand local support for schools**

While the Turkish curriculum affords some flexibility to schools to create their own classroom activities, technical support for teaching, learning and assessment is provided primarily by the ministry. Given the size of Turkey’s education system, this responsibility can be overwhelming for a single organisation and limit the support that is provided (Gershberg, 2005 [59]). In recent years, several efforts, some with the support of international organisations, have been undertaken to try to provide more technical support at the school level (Şen and Bandyopadhyay, 2010 [60]; Çınkır, 2010 [61]). But these have largely focused on decision-making and administrative tasks rather than on the kinds of instructional support that can be provided closer to schools (Balkar and Kasurka, 2015 [62]; Çınkır, 2010 [61]).

**Bring centres of support closer to schools**

Identifying local centres of support could improve the responsiveness of assistance to schools as they implement curriculum reform (Schleicher, 2015 [32]; World Bank, 2014 [63]). Moreover, local sources of support can be better placed to understand the context of schools.
and provide more tailored guidance compared to a central location, which is naturally further from the daily reality faced by school-level actors (Higham, Hopkins and Matthews, 2009[64]).

Several countries and economies have devolved their support systems following curriculum reform. In 2017, Austria embarked on a comprehensive education reform that included restructuring school time and creating school learning groups. As part of the reform package, new education directorates were established in each province and were given responsibility for testing and implementing new pedagogical approaches in schools from their jurisdictions (OECD, 2017[65]). Slovenia changed the curriculum and structure of its general upper secondary schools in 2009 (OECD, 2016[66]). To help implement the reform, the country also created school development teams that operate at municipal- and school-levels. The teams are composed of principals and high-quality teachers (school champions) who help embed national changes into school practices (Sentočnik, 2014[67]). While these countries are much smaller than Turkey, their approaches to providing support directly to schools provide examples to draw on.

In Turkey, evaluation and assessment centres have been created to decentralise how schools are supported in their assessment activities. This practice can be extended to localising the support that schools receive with respect to implementing the curriculum. For instance, provincial education directorates, and in some district centres, could play a larger role in providing support services to schools, effectively acting as a middle layer of resources between the national government and schools themselves. They would be responsible for bringing together technical capacity and delivering co-ordinated support that is contextualised to the schools’ environments.

Promote peer-learning and networking

Research into education change has noted that some of the most effective catalysts for implementing reforms can be peer-to-peer relationships between schools (Higham, Hopkins and Matthews, 2009[64]; Fullan, 2004[57]). Importantly, school networking is not just about identifying and learning from “single, heroic individuals” but about teams working together across leadership hierarchies to provide immediate support. The role of the school system is to create an environment in which this type of collaboration is encouraged and facilitated (Greany, 2017[56]).

Other countries and economies have adopted similar approaches. For example, in 2015 Mexico divided the country into five different education regions. Each regional administration was given the responsibility to support each other and engage in state-state co-ordination to foster regional decision making (OECD, 2018[68]). Peer-learning has also been facilitated between individual schools. Box 2.8 provides information about how Finland encourages networking between schools to support them through periods of curriculum reform. While the Finnish context is very different from that of Turkey, the country’s structured approach to curricula reform and use of technology are informative, especially as Turkey has already made a significant investment in the latter.
Box 2.8. Curriculum reform and implementation in Finland

Finland undertakes a comprehensive reform of its curriculum every ten years, with each cycle of reform occurring over roughly a four-year period. The most recent reform began in January 2012 with a meeting of the Finnish Board of Education (FBE) and concluded in August 2016, when the curriculum was officially implemented in Finnish classrooms.

Finnish curriculum reform is collaborative and interactive in nature. Several working groups of over 300 experts and stakeholders are convened to work with the FBE in writing the new curriculum. During the process, three drafts of the curriculum are published to the public and the Finnish government requests feedback after the release of each draft. The final curriculum is available online and is accompanied by a video from the Minister of Education in which the objectives and content of the newest curriculum reform are explained.

Similar to Turkey, schools in Finland are expected to adapt the curriculum to their own environments (see Chapter 3). Therefore, the curriculum represents what Finland calls “the starting point of a cascade” and is designed around several “wedges,” which act to open up opportunities for schools to further pursue the desired directions. Wedges that were identified in the development of the most recent curriculum include integrative [transversal] studies, school environments and promoting school networking.

Once schools begin adapting the national curriculum for their own use, they are supported extensively by the national government and each other. The FBE has even created a fund to support 180 schools from 38 municipalities who wish to learn from each other. Furthermore, all school-level curricula are submitted to and housed by an online repository such that the curricula can be reviewed for alignment with the national curriculum. Finally, the FBE commissions institutes of tertiary education to develop professional development programmes aligned with the curriculum for teachers. These programmes are particularly helpful in aiding rural municipalities that have fewer resources and less capacity.


Conclusion

Turkey’s curriculum provides the foundation for a profound transformation of teaching, learning and assessment in the country. Ensuring that teachers, schools and society share a clear understanding of the curriculum’s aspirations and feel supported in following the curriculum are important steps towards effective implementation. The remaining chapters in this review set out what changes can be made to the assessment system – in terms of how teachers use assessment and the role of national examinations and assessment – so that the changes to teaching, learning and assessment envisaged by the curriculum are integrated into the classroom.
### Table 2.4. Policy recommendations

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<tr>
<th>Policy issues</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
<th>Actions</th>
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| 2.1. Developing a curriculum framework to give greater coherence and clarity to national learning goals | 2.1.1. Develop a unifying national curriculum framework | • Articulate the overall learning goals in a vision statement  
• Describe the differences between competency-based and knowledge-based teaching and learning  
• Define and promote transversal, 21st century competencies  
• Explain constructivist pedagogy and provide examples of its usage |
|  | 2.1.2. Use the curriculum framework to guide future revisions of individual domain curricula | • Ensure that overall goals are well represented in future domain-level curricula objectives  
• Give stronger emphasis to competency-based learning in future domain-level curricula  
• Align future domain-level curricula with constructivist approaches |
| 2.2. Developing learning standards to help teachers understand what students are expected to know and be able to do | 2.2.1 Develop learning standards | • Establish standards with performance levels in core subjects  
• Develop learning standards around grade levels  
• Make standards a reference point for other reforms  
• Support the use of standards |
| 2.3. Communicating national learning goals to society to build trust and support for change | 2.3.1. Make national learning goals more visible | • Build a national communications campaign  
• Showcase examples of successful changes |
|  | 2.3.2. Expand local support for schools | • Bring centres of support closer to schools  
• Promote peer-learning and networking |
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