

# ADULT LITERACY EDUCATION MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS AT SCHOOL IN TURKEY



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# **ADULT LITERACY EDUCATION**

## **MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS AT SCHOOL IN TURKEY**

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

Although education is a major concern for most people today, parents living in rural areas and the outskirts of large cities in Turkey do not always encourage their daughters to go to school. In order for women to express themselves as adults in society and to meet their social needs without difficulty, they need to gain the basic literacy skills, including reading and writing, on which lifelong learning is built. Listening, comprehension, self-expression and communication are all related to literacy. Individuals in modern societies cannot reach the desired level of knowledge unless they have reading skills. Similarly, they cannot share their knowledge and ideas with others unless they acquire effective writing skills.

Adult education, which is an important phase of lifelong learning, is not a system limited to the completion of missing education, or simply a second chance for those who were unable to obtain an education when they were of school age. Adult education has a vital role to play in solving the serious problems of the world today, such as poverty, social exclusion, migration, the destruction of the natural environment, climate change, decreasing food and natural resources, epidemics, and increasing pressures in terms of new technologies in all aspects of daily life. These topics are high on the agendas for international developmental and educational efforts.

The population of Turkey as at 31 December 2009 was 72 561 312, 50.3% of whom were males and 49.7% females. Some 75.5% of the total population lived in cities, while 24.5% lived in villages and small towns.

The median age in Turkey is 28.3 years: 27.7 for men and 28.8 for women. The median age among the urban population is 28.4 years, whereas in villages it is 27.9. People aged 15–64 represent 67% of the total population; 26% of the population are in the 0–14 age group and 7% are aged 65 years and older (Turkish Statistical Institute, 2010 data).

## Definition of literacy in the Turkish context

Literacy usually starts with individuals being able to deduce meaning from written signs and symbols. In the past, 'being literate' was defined as the ability of individuals to read their name and surname and to produce a signature. The concept of literacy was later defined as 'reading and writing a simple sentence in daily life and also understanding the meaning. Literacy is not a skill confined to transforming symbols to sounds and meanings. Individuals are considered literate when they can use reading and writing both socially and culturally' (Durgunoğlu, 2003, pp. 3, 5).

Güneş (1997, pp. 13–16) described various levels of literacy:

- illiterate: individuals with no basic skills in reading, writing or mathematics;
- half-literate: individuals who lack one of these skills, or have acquired one of them to a certain extent but have not progressed further;
- basic literacy: individuals who have newly acquired these skills;
- functional literacy: individuals who use these skills in their daily lives;
- multi-functional literacy: individuals who use these skills in personal, social, cultural and economic life and continue to develop them;
- hidden literacy: new literates who can progress no further and gradually lose the knowledge and skills they have just acquired.

## Data on illiteracy

There are 52 728 513 people above the age of 15 in Turkey; 4 863 414 (9.22%) of these are illiterate, and 3 896 716 (80.12%) of the illiterate population are women.

**TABLE 1.1 ILLITERATE PEOPLE AGED 15 AND ABOVE, BY GENDER AND RURAL/URBAN AREAS, 2008**

Gender	Rural		Urban		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
<b>Female</b>	1 645 622	25.2	2 251 094	11.3	3 896 716	18.3
<b>Male</b>	449 651	7.0	517 047	2.6	966 698	4.8
<b>Overall total</b>	<b>2 095 273</b>	<b>16.1</b>	<b>2 768 141</b>	<b>6.9</b>	<b>4 863 414</b>	<b>11.5</b>

Source: Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK), 2008 data

The illiteracy rate is higher in rural than in urban areas, and higher in lower-income than higher-income groups. It is clear that whether an individual lives in a rural or urban area has a major effect on their state of literacy.

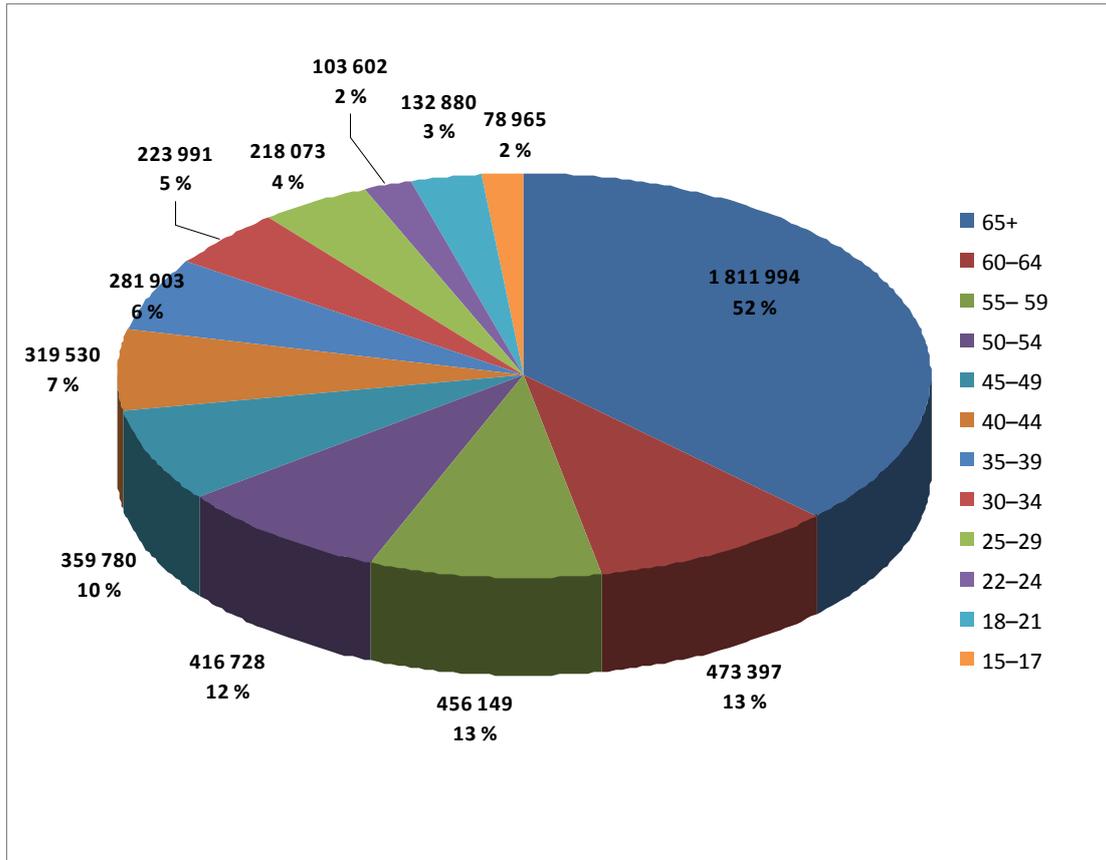
Statistics show that illiteracy and low schooling rates are also related to whether an individual is male or female. The higher illiteracy rates among women, in both rural and urban areas, are worthy of note.

Furthermore, illiteracy rates among older people are higher than those among young individuals.

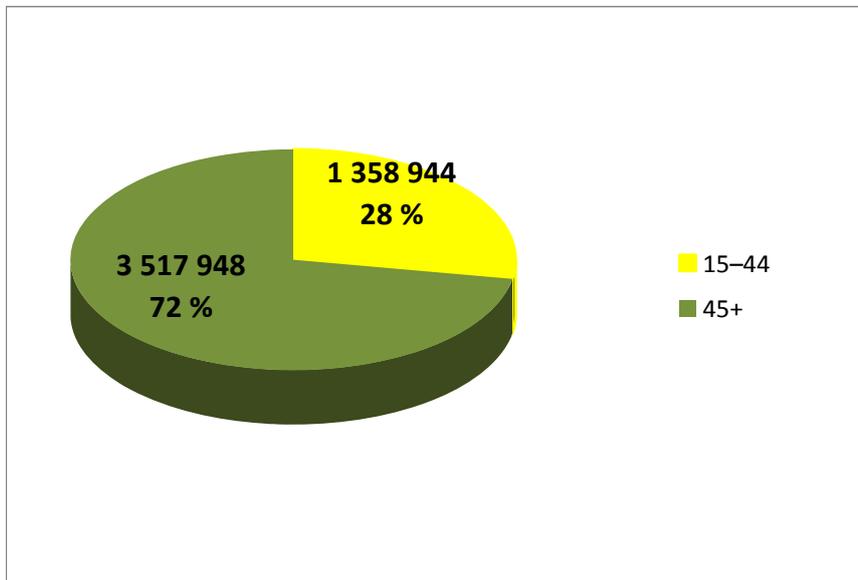
Some 72% of the illiterate population aged 15+ are people over the age of 45. As a result of deteriorating powers of perception, visual and hearing impairments, symptoms of ageing, and health problems, the motivation for and interest in reading and writing in this group is lower than in other age categories.

On the other hand, poor people with the lowest levels of both literacy and income benefit the most from education in terms of increased literacy and income levels, which points to a close correlation between illiteracy and poverty (Sayılan, 2005, pp. 106–114).

**FIGURE 1.1 DISTRIBUTION OF ILLITERACY IN DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS (15+)**



**FIGURE 1.2 DISTRIBUTION OF ILLITERACY IN THE 15-44 AND 45+ AGE GROUPS**



## 2. THE 'MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS AT SCHOOL' CAMPAIGN

### Goals and targets of the literacy campaign

The 'Mothers and daughters at school' campaign is targeted primarily at young girls and women who live in socioeconomically deprived and priority development regions as well as migrant-receiving cities, who cannot benefit from educational opportunities and did not complete compulsory education. The campaign aims to reach three million citizens aged 15 years and over to enable them to become literate and to take a step further in their education (attend open primary schools). The target is to equip at least 60% of illiterate individuals with literacy skills in each province.

Another objective of the campaign is to educate participants about topics such as family education, family planning, basic life skills, computer use and child care. Individuals are encouraged to participate in other courses offered by Public Education Centres. Motivational and informative programmes, seminars and panel discussions are organised. Moreover, citizens who complete the second level of the literacy course can apply to attend a driving course.

The campaign is expected to increase the access of the target group to basic education, and to reinforce the positive aspects of adult education.

### Assessing the baseline and measuring progress

With a view to measuring the state of illiteracy and the progress throughout the campaign various steps are taken.

1. Residential addresses based on 2008 data from the Turkish Statistical Institute are used.
2. Success rates are measured in the 81 provinces in terms of the number of course participants and graduates. Data are processed by the Public Education Centre's automated system.
3. Quarterly provincial reports and annual national reports are compiled.
4. The provinces are informed about the progress they have made in relation to the targets set.

### Planning the campaign

In order to comply with the target, planning for the campaign included representatives from not only the organisations and institutions of the Ministry of National Education, but also the local administrations (municipalities, mukhtars), other public organisations and institutions (especially prisoners under the control of the Ministry of Justice and soldiers under the command of the General Staff), non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the private sector.

As per the Official Note No 2008/39 of 3 June 2008, the General Secretariats of the president and the prime minister, all ministries, general staff, the headquarters of the Ministry of National Education and the 81 provincial directorates of national education were informed about the campaign.

The note explains:

- the aim of the campaign;
- the field-scanning exercise (on-site identification of illiterate individuals) to be carried out before the start of the campaign;
- issues relating to counselling<sup>1</sup> and the introduction of the campaign;
- the allocation of trainers, with courses to be offered even for one trainee;
- cooperation with NGOs and other public organisations and institutions;
- the fact that applications are to be made to the management of the Public Education Centres.

Subsequently, Circular Letter No 4260 of 8 July 2008 was sent out to the 81 provincial governments. It asked all provinces to set up a Campaign Steering Committee under the leadership of the deputy governor and consisting of the provincial directors of national education, agriculture and health; representatives from the university and the mayor's office; the provincial mufti; the director of social services; and NGO representatives. Responsibilities and duties were clearly defined for these committees in all provinces, counties, districts and towns:

Within the framework of the campaign carried out throughout the country, the targets set in accordance with the number of illiterate citizens in each province until the end of the campaign are being assessed on the basis of the annual rates. The number of trainees provided through the automated system, the number of citizens to be accessed until the end of each year and the number of citizens for whom a literacy certificate has been issued are being published on the institutional website of the General Directorate for Apprenticeship and Non-formal Education at provincial level on the first day of each month, in the order of their success rate. Provinces that fall behind the set targets are being warned to accelerate their training activities and take necessary action. Moreover, the opportunity to see the order of success rates in all provinces encourages those that see a significant difference between themselves and the successful provinces to work harder and increase their rate of success.

The committees were charged with carrying out the campaign, ensuring coordination between the units, and planning the work and procedures.

The Circular Letter also stated that the adult literacy books published for use in the programmes should be delivered free of charge by the Ministry of National Education, that no fee would be charged for the courses, how the campaign is to be advertised and how brochures should be prepared to publicise the campaign. This required a significant level of funding; the activities were co-sponsored by Public Bank Inc. In addition, local resources were mobilised to support the campaign at the rates to be defined by the steering committees.

### **Inauguration of the campaign**

The campaign was announced on 3 June 2008 by the Turkish prime minister, Mr R.T. Erdoğan, and his wife at Cemal Reşit Rey Concert Hall in Istanbul. This event was attended by many media and press representatives, along with representatives from a wide variety of organisations and institutions.

Following its inauguration, the campaign was publicised through 18 local papers, 6 local press offices, 14 TV channels, 3 radio stations and 44 internet portals. It was also publicised on hoardings and notice boards on the busy streets of towns. In addition, a website was created to publicise the campaign and give information, such as details of preparatory studies and contact addresses.

Following a three-month preparation, the campaign was officially launched on 8 September 2008, which is the International Reading and Writing Day. The General Directorate of

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<sup>1</sup> Many illiterate citizens are old and have health problems, and there is a need to change the belief they hold that they cannot acquire literacy skills. The experts at the Guidance and Research Centres are therefore providing psychological counselling services in order to convince such individuals that they can become literate citizens, to inform them about the benefits of becoming literate, and to motivate them during their studies. Furthermore, these experts visit every household to inform citizens of the economic support, free courses, and free teaching materials that are available if they participate, as well as other incentives and support to be provided by governorates.

Apprenticeship and Non-formal Education of the Ministry of National Education is the main directorate in charge of the campaign.

## **Contents of literacy programmes**

Courses within the campaign follow three different programmes: the Adult Literacy and Basic Education Programme and the Functional Literacy Programme, which are implemented in line with the protocols signed with NGOs (Mother and Child Education Foundation); and the Facilitated Literacy Programme (Rotary Clubs of Turkey).

### **1. Adult Literacy and Basic Education Programme**

The Adult Literacy and Basic Education Programme aims to enable participants to:

- gain functional literacy skills (reading and writing);
- use these skills for self- and social development;
- be environmentally friendly and peaceful;
- have local, national and global human values.

It comprises four components:

- helping illiterate individuals to acquire functional literacy skills (reading and writing);
- providing an education equal to five years of primary education;
- developing knowledge, skills and attitudes that contribute to improving the quality of people's lives;
- preparing individuals for lifelong learning.

The programme has two parts: the Adult First Level Literacy and Basic Education Programme; and the Adult Second Level Literacy Programme.

Building on the basic skills to be acquired, participants are expected to develop the following additional skills:

- efficient and effective use of the Turkish language
- communication
- critical thinking
- creative thinking
- researching
- problem solving
- deduction
- reasoning
- decision making
- using information technologies
- entrepreneurship
- environmental awareness
- planning and production
- protecting oneself from natural disasters and respecting safety rules
- traffic safety
- self-management
- learning to learn
- setting a goal
- getting to know oneself and observing self-development
- emotional control
- sense of responsibility
- proper perception of time and space
- participating, sharing, cooperating and working in a team
- leadership

- respecting others
- recognising basic concepts of science.

The Adult Literacy and Basic Education Programme teaches reading and writing using the sound-based teaching method. This aims to enable students to create a phrase based on sounds within a short period of time. Basic literacy skills (reading and writing) are taught using five learning activities, namely listening, speaking, reading, writing, and reading visuals and visual presentations.

## **2. Functional Literacy Programme**

In this inductive sound-based programme, reading and writing techniques are used functionally. The programme consists of 120 hours of literacy skills plus 80 hours of reinforcement. As it is based on understanding, analytical skills and the daily life experiences of adults, it can be defined as a general approach to learning and teaching. Course books on topics such as democratic participation and exercising civil and political rights include functional themes and information that are important for the lives of women in Turkish society.

## **3. Facilitated Literacy Programme**

This programme consists of the following modules:

- first module: 120-hour programme for individuals who are completely illiterate;
- second module: 180-hour programme for trainees who can read and write several texts and comment on what they read.

## **Trainers**

Since there are more potential trainees in rural areas and remote towns and regions than there are in urban centres, and since there is a shortage of trainers in the more rural areas, Act No 65332 of 6 November 2008 established some quality criteria for trainers, and facilitated the appointment of new trainers. Following these provisions, an increase in the number of courses was observed.

## **Incentives and rewards**

Act No 5957 of 6 October 2008 provided for economic support, as well as incentives and rewards, for participants on literacy courses. Thus, citizens who did not complete primary education, who have not been economically independent because of their lack of literacy skills, and who have limited financial means can have their transport costs paid. Furthermore, provincial governments – to the extent their budgets allow them to do so – provide food, clothing and heating aid to course participants to help them overcome some of the barriers to participation. Those people who have successfully completed the course are given rewards and promotions, such as household electrical appliances, gold coins and coal, according to their primary needs. These arrangements have had a major impact on people who would not have been able to join the courses for financial reasons, and have clearly resulted in an increase in the level of demand.

During a high-level national event held on 20–21 December 2008, which was intended to motivate and encourage participation, Mrs Erdoğan handed over course certificates and rewards to people who had successfully completed the first level literacy course during the first three months of the campaign. Similarly, governors and district governors gave certificates and rewards to citizens who had become literate through attending courses in the various provinces and counties.

As of 1 July 2010, 849 541 adults had been trained or were undergoing literacy training, and 451 547 had received their certificates.

## **Placing people on second level courses**

A number of individuals were identified during the field-scanning exercise as being illiterate, as they had dropped out of the fourth or fifth grade of primary school and did not have a school certificate or diploma. Nevertheless, they might qualify for second level literacy courses, as they already possessed some competences. Hence, a test was designed and is administered by a commission of specialist teachers. Individuals who pass this test can immediately join second level literacy courses.

### 3. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

As mentioned previously, detailed quarterly reports are compiled by the provincial steering committees. These reports are based on inputs from county, district and town steering boards and include information on the result of the field-scanning exercise, enrolments, course book delivery, the allocation of trainers, counselling, publicity for the campaign, the granting of incentives and rewards, and reasons why individuals drop out of courses. All reports are carefully evaluated by the General Directorate of Apprenticeship and Non-formal Education.

The Public Education Centre's automated system has been updated to perform all procedures electronically, including enrolling participants according to their Turkish ID numbers, opening and closing courses, issuing certificates, evaluating the results and taking necessary measures accordingly. This puts in place an effective and efficient tracking and evaluation system that is accessible at all times.

Success rates in terms of course graduates as a proportion of the number of illiterate individuals identified in each province are published on the Ministry of National Education's website. In addition, the minister sends letters to the provincial directorates of national education to inform them of the progress made. Provinces may be asked to step up their efforts if appropriate. This approach has led to healthy competition between the provinces: they are motivated and encouraged to assess their own progress, to plan course provision and to follow the example of those provinces in which the target of 60% has already, or has almost, been reached.

The event held on 20–21 December 2008 involved Mrs Erdoğan and the national education minister, 81 provincial directors of national education, 81 Public Education Centre directors, and governors of the 10 provinces with the highest illiteracy rates. They assessed the results of the first three months of the campaign, discussed the measures to be taken and presented proposals. As previously mentioned, the event was also used to award certificates to the first successful candidates.

Quarterly reports are summarised in a national report that informs the ministry about campaign-related challenges in the provinces, successful practices, the impact of current activities and any new initiatives that should be introduced.

For example, as a result of the findings from the national report, a target group of illiterate individuals has been identified for whom it had previously been very difficult to offer literacy education, namely those with a mental or physical disability, including hearing or visual impairments. In cooperation with special educational institutions under the General Directorate for Special Education Guidance and Counselling Services of the Ministry of National Education and with specialist teachers, literacy programmes have now been devised that take into account the needs of these individuals in terms of the type and extent of their disabilities.

Also as a result of the national report, new films, advertisements and video clips have now been prepared. Visual media have proved to be very effective for raising awareness and for motivating and encouraging individuals, compared with the publicity methods, guidance studies and attempts at persuasion that had been employed previously.

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