



## Assessment of European Union Funded Projects Finalised by the Ministry of National Education based on the Opinions of Administrators and Experts \*

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### Abstract

The main purpose of this study is to assess European Union Training Projects (Support to Basic Education Program (SBEP), Strengthening Vocational Education and Training Project, (SVET) Modernisation of the Vocational and Technical Education Project, (MVET)) finalised by the Ministry of National Education in terms of their purpose, process, outcomes and sustainability dimensions based on opinions of Turkish and foreign administrators as well as the managers and experts taking part in the decision-making and implementation processes.

Participants of this study are Turkish and foreign administrators and educational experts who were engaged in European Union funded projects. Taking into account general qualifications of the participants of this study, the most common feature is that they are effectively involved in decision making and implementation processes of SBEP, SVET, and MVET projects. Not only were the opinions of decision takers but also of those who carried out the pilot practices at local level considered for this study. In order to ensure objectivity, opinions of all Turkish and foreign experts participated in the preparation and implementation processes of SBEP, SVET and MVET projects were received.

Data of this study was collected in two ways. First of all, face to face interviews were held with several participants voluntarily agreed on giving opinions and accordingly, the data was recorded. Semi-structured interview forms were developed in order to get comments of those who accepted to give their opinions. Later, these interviews were analysed. The participants who were/could not attend interviews were asked to present their opinions in writing and semi-structured interview forms were submitted. Later on, these opinions were analysed.

### Keywords

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The main conclusions of the study are as follows:

It was observed that the outcomes of SBEP, SVET and MVET Projects funded by the European Union were extended throughout the country. Considering the preparation, implementation and outcomes of SBEP, SVET and MVET projects, the common strengths of these projects were mostly related with strong embrace of the project by the parties, well designed TORs and aims, and having adequate budgets, while the weaknesses of these projects were related with long implementation periods, having very different components, procedures of procurement envisaged in the legislation, lack of experienced staff and difficulties faced by local administrations in terms of sustainability of these projects.

SBEP, SVET and MVET projects have had a significant impact on the change of the MoNE's vision since these projects were the first ones under the institutional structure of the MoNE. SBEP helped Turkey to undertake its commitments under the "Education and Culture" chapter and those related with the "Fundamental Human Rights" during EU accession process. Thanks to these projects, Government of Turkey has proved its decisiveness on educational reforms and caught up with the European Union norms and contributed a lot to its accession process to the EU.

SVET Project has solved such issues as what kind of discussions on vocational training and how should be held. Experience of the European Union on vocational education has been deemed as an important comparison tool. However, at the end, it has been concluded that it is essential to develop a system specific to Turkey.

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### **Introduction**

The current economic, social and political conditions force the countries to look for a way of living together as modern villages. This is an interesting process during which everyone needs and has to take care of each other. It is impossible to roll back the clock to the time when the tribes lived together, but did not know each other. The societies will look for a way of living together as long as they continue to modernise, develop humanitarian living standards and more specifically, endeavour to bring up happy individuals. Turkey has turned its face to the west for the last two centuries and as of the establishment of the Republic, has continued its westernisation project with the European Union (EU) accession process. The political, economic and social results of this process have impacts on all and education is one of those sectors influenced the most. This process is on-going mostly through training projects funded by the instrument for pre- accession assistance provided by the European Union to support Turkey in its harmonisation period.

It is clear that the public has positive and negative opinions about the projects funded by the EU. These opinions are related with such issues as how the project aims are identified, to what extent the results are achieved, the sustainability of the project outputs, the qualifications of the employed foreign experts, whether the resources are used effectively or not and the suitability of the study visits. There is an on-going discussion both between the ordinary citizens and the intellectuals about why these projects are carried out and what/who they are useful for (Turan, 2012; Akyüz, 2015; Gümüş, 2015, ). However, the researches on the loans/grants provided by the EU, the implementation of these projects and the evaluation of their impacts are not sufficient. In fact, the evaluation of these projects is

important to use the loans received by the MoNE for the benefit of Turkey. This study includes a comparison of the financial contributions provided by the EU in the field of education with the project purposes and an evaluation of their efficiency.

Since the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, up to 1990s, partnerships were maintained with international organizations at all levels of education. Support credits of European Training Foundation (ETF) and the World Bank were utilised in the field of vocational education, and in infrastructure work, respectively. Moreover, Turkey benefited from expert support to take the advantage of international experience. In the first years of the Republic, it was also consulted to prominent educational specialists such as Dewey, Kühne, Buyse, Malcheand Parker. As of 2000s, Turkey advanced its cooperation with organizations like European Union, OECD, European Investment Bank, European Training Foundation and the World Bank (Akyüz, 2015)

Ministry of National Education is the executive and decision making body for the international projects related with education. MoNE is the highest authority to decide on the educational policies, education programs, school books, education and training tools and the fundamental teaching aims in line with the present requirements for the Turkish national education system (Article 56 of the Law No. 1739 on National Education). According to the statistics of 2014-2015 School Year, MoNE provides educational services for 59.909 schools/institutions as well as 919.393 teachers and 17.559.989 students (MoNE Statistics of 2014-2015 School Year, 2015). Considering the number of students, teachers and staff, the number of people under MoNE is more than the population of many countries. This makes education more important and difficult for Turkey than the other countries.

MoNE needs an important resource to keep up with the rapid transformation in economic, political and social terms and to meet the educational demands emerging in the information society of Turkey (Toffler, 1996; Murphy and Forsyth, 1999; Giddens, 2001; Gümüş, 2015; Peca, 2000;). Although recently MoNE has had the biggest share in the general budget, this is not enough. The share of MoNE budget in the central administration budget was 7.15% in 2000, while this accounted for 10.42% in 2007; %10.30 in 2008; 10.63 % in 2009 and 9.84% in 2010. This ratio was 10.91% in 2011 and 11.16% in 2012; 11.76% in 2013 and 12.76% in 2014 (MoNE Statistics of 2014-2015 School Year, 2015, 257). Therefore, sometimes loans or grants from international institutions such as the World Bank and the European Union (EU) are utilised instead of using the general budget to implement projects aiming to develop and strengthen education system (MVET, Final Report, 2006; SBEP, Final Report, 2007; SVET, Final Report, 2009).

#### *European Union and Turkey*

As of the Tanzimat Reform era, Turkey has turned its face to the west and has had an aim of reaching to the contemporary living standards of the EU. The most concrete sign of Turkey's will to harmonise with Europe is the EU accession process. Following the Treaty of Rome, Turkey applied to become a member of the European Union on 31 June 1959 (Gülcan, 2005; EUSG, 2011a). European Union offers many assistance instruments to the countries wishing to be members. The financial assistance instruments that Turkey benefits from in its accession process are as follows:

#### *Mediterranean Countries Cooperation Program (MEDA) (Mediterranean Economic Development Area)*

MEDA is a financial support program launched in 1995 within the framework of European-Mediterranean Partnership. 90% of the funds within the scope of MEDA program are provided in accordance with the bilateral Treaties to be concluded with the Mediterranean countries, while 10% is allocated for the regional cooperation programs identified under the previously- formed Renovated Mediterranean Policy (European Union to Turkey, 2011; EUGS, 2011d).

It has been envisaged that 5 billion 350 million Euros would be granted under MEDA II formed for 2000-2006 period and Euro-Mediterranean Partnership Loan Package amounting to 6 billion 400 million Euros was allocated for the use of Mediterranean countries. Some amendments were made to increase the efficiency of the program by the help of MEDA II. These amendments

aimed to rationalise the decision-making processes in the selection of the projects and make them more strategic; raise the programming and implementation capacities of the Mediterranean Countries; reduce the procedures of the program and accelerate the implementation process (Under-secretariat of Foreign Trade, 2007; Delegation of the European Union to Turkey, 2011; EUGS, 2011d;).

Under MEDA, the Ministry of National Education carried out the following projects: Support to Basic Education Program (SBEP) with a budget of 100 million Euros, Strengthening Vocational Education and Training Project (SVET) with a budget of 58.2 million Euros and Modernisation of the Vocational and Technical Education Project (MVET) with a budget of 18.5 million Euros. (PKMB,2008)

Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA). In 2007, EU decided to provide pre-accession assistance through a single instrument as “Pre-accession Assistance (IPA)” This change is closely related with the start of Turkey’s accession negotiations in 2005 by advancing a step further in the accession process as a candidate country.

In this process not only names of the programmes but also the procedures, priorities and implementation mechanisms were also changed within the framework of the accession negotiations. This new instrument was prepared based on the enlargement experience of the European Commission and the needs of the candidate and potential candidate countries. IPA aims to support Turkey in the membership process including the reforms either economic or social, and to provide help in getting prepared for the management of structural funds (EU, 2006; STB, 2008).

#### *Educational Policy of the European Union*

Since the very beginning, the European Union has developed an educational vision. However, the Union does not wish to take responsibility in this respect as education is generally deemed as a risky policy area. Nevertheless, EU continued to develop a common vision especially in the fields of vocational education, human rights and higher education. Although EU does not establish a binding common educational policy, it deems the harmonisation of the national education systems as a necessity for the future of Europe (Tuzcu, 2006). Apart from teaching generations for the future, the educational policy is an important tool to pursue a national policy (Walkenhorst, 2005) As a result of the social and economic developments observed in the wake of globalisation, supra-national educational policies has begun to be accepted more and social and cultural rules have become more homogeneous (Benton, 2006, p.133).

With respect to the educational policies of the EU, such documents as Treaty of Rome, Janne Report, Treaty of Maastricht, White Paper, Lisbon Decisions and Copenhagen Declaration respectively are significant (Cited by Demir, 2011). Article 128 of Treaty of Rome signed in 1957 is the first legal basis to form a common policy on the education throughout the Community (Varsori, 2004). Although education was on the back burner due to the economic concerns, it was an important milestone for the educational policy of the Community (Pepin, 2007). In the report prepared by Henry Jane in 1973, the relation between general and vocational education was addressed and the concept of “The European Dimension of the Education” was mentioned for the first time (Ertl, 2006, 8; Janne, 1973).

In the Treaty of Maastricht concluded between 12 EU member states in 1992 and which is also the treaty of the EU, the cooperation between the member states and the Commission was strengthened and the educational field was clearly and explicitly recognised. With this Treaty, which is regarded as one of the main milestones of the education in the EU, it was decided that the member states will be responsible for the context and organisation of the education systems on their own; in other words, the relevant laws and regulations will be “transposed” (Treaty of Maastricht, 1992; Bainbridge and Murray, 2000a; Pepin, 2007;).

Moreover, it has been provided for in Articles 126 and 127 of this Treaty that the Commission would prepare more education programs with a wider scope and the mobility of students and the trainers would be encouraged in terms of the education systems of the member states and exchange of information and experience on common issues. This Treaty which mentions and promotes the

mobility of individuals and among the member states for general and vocational training is deemed to shape the educational basis of the EU Treaty and Articles 126 and 127 form the legal basis of the general and vocational education policies of the EU (Cited by Demir, 2011. Porte, 1997; Ertl, 2006;).

#### *Alignment with the Educational Policies of the European Union*

Member or candidate countries try to form their education systems in line with the educational policies developed by the European Union. Candidate countries such as Turkey carry out some activities to align with the educational policies related with them. Therefore, Turkey is expected to adapt these policies as a candidate country (Topsakal, 2003).

“Progress Reports” published by the European Union every year define the shortcomings of the candidate countries and request the them to take the necessary actions. Based on better practices and more social consistency, the European Union aims to have the most competitive economy based on dynamic information with a sustainable growth. To achieve this goal, heads of states and governments are required to “revolutionise the economy of Europe and to develop a reliable program for social welfare and modernisation of the education systems”. In 2002, it was stated that Europe should be the world leader in terms of education and training systems until 2010. This means revolutionising of the education and training in Europe. In order to guarantee the contributions to the Lisbon strategy, the Ministers of Education have adapted the following three fundamental aims to be achieved as a whole until 2010 for the benefit of the European Union and the citizens (MEBGE, 2006):

- Increasing the quality and efficiency of education and training systems in the EU,
- Guaranteeing the access to all educational institutions,
- Extending the education and training to a wider area.

#### *Educational Reforms*

Prior to the implementation of the projects financed by the World Bank and the European Union and which are carried out by MoNE, it should be clarified why MoNE chose to work with these institutions. One of the main reasons is related with the economic situation of Turkey, considering the projects carried out with the World Bank. The principle motivation lying under the projects carried out with the EU is about Turkey’s efforts to harmonise with the EU.

Dramatic changes have been observed in the educational policies for the past decades. One of the main basis of these changes can be considered as globalisation (Rinne, 2008, Cited by Gür, 2011). It is known that institutions having an international effect, such as WB, EU and OECD set a continuous agenda about the educational reforms by giving loans, granting or donating, publishing reports and analysis, preparing comparative indications and score tables (Domenech and Mora-Ninci, 2009; Steiner-Khamsi, 2004b; Cited by Gür, 2011). As a result of this, globalisation and economic competition have rapidly brought the economic perspective of education on the agenda (Cited by Gür, 2011; Lings, 2005; Grek, 2009)

Increased efficiency, loans, grants, projects, reports prepared and comparative tables do not necessarily similarize education systems of the countries since the educational transfer is interpreted and shaped within the scope of cultural and economic context (Cited by Çelik, 2012. Steiner-Khamsi, 2004b, p. 201). This is a result of the fact that each nation state perceives and implements the reports and proposals presented within the framework of its own priorities and values.

The 15th National Education Council Meeting held in 1996, the Seventh Development Plan prepared (1996-2000) and Master Plan on Education for 15 Years emphasised that multi-dimensional and comprehensive educational reforms are required to prepare Turkey for the 21st century, to increase the quality of education and to attain the educational levels of the EU and developed countries. The fact that illiteracy rates, in early 1990s, the schooling rates and periods were much lower and - than the EU states and developed countries are defined as the most important structural problem encountered in the education system since there is a direct relation between education and development; education and qualified labour; education and more competitive Turkey. It has been



underlined that low performance indicators in terms of education will lead to a slowdown in the development and improvement of the country and a delay in information society as well as the globalisation period (DPT, 2011; Çelik, 2012; MEB, 2012).

European Union (EU) has acted as an effective actor in the implementation of the projects to harmonise Turkey with the educational policies of the EU and has formed educational policies since 2000. Considering the EU education projects finalised by the MoNE, Support to Basic Education Program (SBEP), Strengthening Vocational Education and Training Project, (SVET) Modernisation of the Vocational and Technical Education Project, (MVET) are among the most prominent projects in terms of both the scope and the financial capacity. These projects have had great impacts on the Turkish education system with respect to education program, development of institutional capacity and human resources, quality work, policy and strategy documents and available modern equipment.

Within the framework of SBEP, information meetings were held for more than 40 thousand participants to identify the children under risk and take the necessary measures; the curriculum of the primary schools were renewed; teachers' books, students' books and activity books were prepared for all lessons in three series and financial assistance was provided for their publication. Moreover, literacy programs at the first and second levels were developed for adults and pilot practices were carried out; programs of 207 public education centres were prepared in modular system; the qualifications of the teachers specialised in a general or a specific field were improved and about 100.000 people including teachers, principals and parents were trained. With respect to physical component, the physical capacities of the educational institutions in 16 provinces were increased; 81 schools, 775 classrooms, 11 public education centres, 37 dwelling houses, 20 dormitories, 1 sport centre, 3 dining halls were built. (TEDP, Inception Report, 2002-2007: SBEP, Final Report, 2007; SBEP, Strategic Report, 2007).

Strengthening Vocational Education and Training Project (SVET) is a five year project with a budget of 58.2 million Euros which was implemented between 2002 and 2007 in accordance with an agreement between the Turkish Government and European Commission and funded by the European Union Mediterranean Program (MEDA) in order to strengthen the vocational education system in Turkey. SVET which was launched to strengthen the vocational and technical education system in Turkey as a whole and in parallel with the socio- economic requirements and lifelong learning principles, to reach the standards of the EU and the developed countries, to build the necessary infrastructure for 12 years of compulsory education and to increase the tendencies of social partners as well as the non-governmental organisations towards the vocational education was carried out in 145 pilot institutions in 30 provinces. (SVET, Inception Report, 2003).

Within the framework of SVET, labour market analyses were conducted; educational and occupational standards were prepared; modules were developed under the program development practises; work was carried out to establish the Vocational Qualifications Authority; pilot projects were supported; policy and strategy document on lifelong learning was drafted. (SVET, Final Report, 2009).

SVET aimed to implement a modern training program which is flexible, easily changeable, modular and based on an integrated approach, in conformity with labour market, occupational standards and local requests rather than an approach focusing on a classical program in vocational and technical education, and which can integrate formal, common and apprenticeship training. Moreover, it is also aimed that the institutional culture will be transformed in line with the increasing participation of social partners in particular, the requirements of the labour market will be understood better, the analysis on labour markets will be compared with respect to European Qualifications Framework and the occupational standards will be improved. (SVET, Final Report, 2009)

Modernisation of the Vocational and Technical Education Project (MVET) is a project with a budget of 18.5 million Euros which was implemented between 2003 and 2007 and funded by the European Union Mediterranean Program (MEDA) in order to support the efforts to increase the

educational quality of the teachers specialised in shop classes and to harmonise with the EU. (MVET, Final Report, 2006). This section will mention the mechanisms for the cooperation in the field of education between the European Union and Turkey.

No research is available about how the EU training projects with a high budget carried out by the MoNE affect the educational policy in Turkey. The EU projects particularly SBEP, SVET and MVET were not assessed in terms of their aims, processes, results and sustainability. In the light of all above-mentioned issues, it is clear that SBEP with a budget of 100 million Euros, SVET with a budget of 58.2 million Euros and MVET with a budget of 18.5 million Euros have had a great potential and effect in terms of the development of the Turkish education systems considering their aims and budgets. Therefore, it is essential to make a more comprehensive and different evaluation about these projects.

The problem of this study is to determine the effects of EU education projects conducted and finalised to harmonise with the EU, on the Turkish education system in terms of the aim, process and sustainability. The main purpose of this study is to evaluate the educational projects (Support to Basic Education Program (SBEP), Strengthening Vocational Education and Training Project, (SVET) Modernisation of the Vocational and Technical Education Project, (MVET) finalised by the Ministry of National Education and financed by the European Union, in terms of their processes, outcomes and sustainability dimensions based on opinions of Turkish and foreign administrators as well as the managers and experts taking part in decision-making and implementation processes. In this respect, the following should be considered:

1. What do they think about the aims of the projects?
  - a) How were these aims identified?
  - b) Are these aims functional?
  - c) Are the structures envisaged in line with these aims functional?
2. What do they think about the implementation processes of these projects?
  - a) What kinds of problems are encountered during the implementation processes of these projects?
  - b) What are the grounds of these problems encountered during the implementation processes of the projects?
3. What do they think about the results of these projects?
  - a) To what extent are these aims achieved?
  - b) What are the reasons of failing to achieve these aims?
  - c) What are the legal effects of these projects on the Turkish education system?
  - d) What are the economic effects of these projects on the Turkish education system?
  - e) What are the political effects of these projects on the Turkish education system?
4. What do they think about the sustainability of these projects?

## Method

This section focuses on the research model, study group, data collection techniques and data analysis.

### *Research Model*

This research is based on the “screening model”. A qualitative research approach has been adopted to evaluate SBEP, SVET, and MVET financed by the European Union in terms of process, outcomes and sustainability sub-dimensions. Aim of the qualitative research is to address a case holistically and in-depth, to analyse its complexity and to understand its context. The data collected for this purpose should be detailed and in-depth. Therefore, in terms of qualitative research, it is important to reflect the whole picture and provide intense descriptions (Punch, 2005)

### *Study Group*

The study group of this research is Turkish and foreign administrations and experts governing the educational policies as regards the EU within the Ministry of National Education. These are senior administrators (deputy undersecretary, relevant general directors, the representative of the European Commission to Turkey, Turkish administrators of the projects carried out under the chairmanship of Projects Coordination Centre within the Ministry of National Education (president and deputies) and foreign team leaders, Turkish and foreign counterparts (procurement specialist, monitoring and evaluation expert, education expert, financial management expert etc.).

Sample group consisted of project experts and administrators contributed or affected the preparation, implementation, finalization and maintenance of the projects which are the subject matter of this study. With the aim of ensuring an objective evaluation process, not only experts of MoNE but also project experts contracted for short-term or long-terms were also covered under the study. Moreover, opinions of the long-term foreign project experts and administrators were also taken.

Data was collected by the author of the study, through face-to-face interviews with the people administering or implementing the projects, or through e-mail if the concerned is abroad or outside the city. Communication experts and project managers provided the contact information of the related people. Contact information of some experts were also available at MoNE.

Table 1 lists the study group of this research. Detailed information about all administrators and experts taking part in this research is available below (Akyüz, 2012):

**Table 1.** Number of the Participants included in the Study Group of this Research

Projects	Administrators											Experts							
	Head of council of education and morality	Deputy Undersecretary	EC Delegation to Turkey Delegasyonu	General Director	Board Member of head council of education and morality	Deputy General Director	Head of Department	Deputy Director of the Provincial Directorate of National Education Müdür Yard.	Turkish Administrators and their deputies for the projects	MoNE Project Manager	European Training Foundation	MoNE Counterparts	Unit Head	Expert (Technical)	Provincial Directorate of National Education PYB	Foreign Team Leaders	Expert Total	TOTAL	
<b>SBEP</b>	1	1	1	2		2	1	23	3	2		<b>36</b>	7	4	2	1	1	<b>15</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>SVEB</b>		1	1	3	1	4	1		3		1	<b>15</b>	5	1	10	1	1	<b>18</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>MVEB</b>		1	1	1					2	2		<b>7</b>	2		5			<b>7</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	1	3	3	6	1	6	2	23	8	4	1	<b>58</b>	14	5	17	2	2	<b>40</b>	<b>98</b>



According to Table 1, the opinions of 98 participants in total were taken about the projects of SBEP, SVET and MVET with 51, 33 and 14 participants, respectively. 58 of these participants are administrators and 40 of them are experts. Table 2 lists the breakdown of the participants in terms of the method utilised in collecting their opinions about the project:.

**Table 1.** Breakdown of the Participants in terms of the method utilised in collecting their Opinions about the Projects

Number	Interview type	SBEP	SVET	MVET	Total
1	Participants with whom face to face interviews were held	12	9	8	29
2	Participants Presenting Opinions in writing	39	24	6	69
3	Participants in Total	51	33	14	98

According to Table 2, 98 participants in total presented their opinions. 5 participants expressed their opinions for SBEP, SVET and MVET each. These participants presenting opinions for each of these three projects are administrators. Apart from the administrators giving opinions for all projects, 51 participants presented opinions about SBEP. 39 of these opinions were presented in writing, while 12 participants attended interviews. 33 participants presented opinions about MVET. 24 of these opinions were presented in writing, while 9 participants attended interviews. The number of the participants presenting their opinions in writing and attending interviews about SVET is 14. 6 of these opinions were presented in writing, while 8 participants attended the interviews.

68 of the participants are male, while 20 are female. When the educational backgrounds of the participants are examined, it is seen that 6 are professors, 9 are doctors, 13 have master's degree and 60 are university graduates.

#### *Limitations*

The Research is limited with

- the EU-funded Support to Basic Education Program, Strengthening Vocational Education and Training Project, and Modernisation of the Vocational and Technical Education Project, finalised by the Ministry of National Education;
- the evaluation of these projects in terms of purpose, process, outcome and sustainability sub dimensions;
- opinions of the Turkish and foreign administrators and experts who took part in these projects.

#### *Data Collection*

In this research, data was collected in two ways. One is the face to face interviews with some of the participants. Interview forms including semi-structured questions were drafted to receive the opinions of the participants who agreed to attend face to face interviews. Later on, these interviews were analysed. As a second way, participants who did not/could not attend interviews were asked to present their opinions in writing. To that end, interview forms consisting semi-structured questions were submitted to the participants. These written opinions were also analysed later on.

Face to face interviews were carried out with each participant separately by the researcher in an independent environment and they were recorded. E-mails were sent to participants who were abroad or outside the city and their opinions were received. Face to face interviews lasted for 30 to 60 minutes.

#### *Data Analysis*

Opinions of the participants with whom face to face interviews were held were recorded in writing. These records and the forms filled were analysed by content analysis method. These methods can be defined as the systematic, impartial and numerical analysis of the content. The main purpose of the content analysis is to obtain concepts and relations to explain the collected data (Yıldırım and

Şimşek, 2005). In the content analysis, first of all, analysis category (main category) and sub categories are detected (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). The analysis category (main categories) of this research is based on the evaluation of the projects (SBEP, SVET, MVET) examined under this research in terms of “ Purpose”, “Implementation Process”, “ Results” and “Sustainability” dimensions in parallel with the sub-purposes of the research. These main categories under this research are defined as follows:

Whether the relevant units presented their opinions for the identification of the project aims, the functionality of these aims and the functionality of the structures in terms of these aims (associations, institutions, project teams, partners etc.). Whether any problems are encountered during the implementation process of the project; if so, who and what caused these problems. Whether the aims identified at the beginning are achieved at the end, the legal, economic and political effects of the project on the Turkish education system. Whether the project can be sustainable in the future. These main categories were divided into three sub-categories to present opinions as “Yes”, “Partially” and “No”. Assessment of the data is based on frequency (f) and percentage (%) and the interpretation of the findings also included the individual comments of the participants. The data analysis process and the activities to prove the validity and reliability of the research are given below:

#### ***Research validity***

With respect to qualitative researches, validity means “observing the fact that the researcher examines as it is and as impartial as possible” as defined by Yıldırım and Şimşek (2005). To ensure the validity of this research, the following steps were followed:

Data analysis was made as follows: a) Data collection tools were classified according to the positions (administrator and expert) of the participants. b) Coding was based on the answers of these groups. c) Answers for each question were filed separately. d) These answers in different files were read and summarised in one sentence as much as possible. e) In order to ensure a systematic practice, similar/same opinions were included in one point as much as possible.

Summarised analyses were sent to the participants contacted. The projects examined under this research were chosen among the projects that the researcher did not take part in. Participants of this research were quite homogeneous in terms of the aspects such as their role in the projects, occupation, status, etc. Therefore, it is believed that this research reflects the social facts of the findings obtained for its internal validity.

In order to ensure the internal validity of this research, the following conditions should be met (Yıldırım, 2010):

- Do the concepts obtained constitute a meaningful whole?
- Are the findings obtained in conformity with the previous conceptual framework or theory?
- Were unclear facts or cases determined?
- Was any alternative approach used to explain the findings?

It is likely that the findings obtained, the cases or facts mentioned are clear; the findings are compatible with those obtained in different researches on the same topics; and these findings were interpreted alternatively; and thus. The research has an internal consistency.

### ***Research Reliability***

In researches, reliability is a guarantee that the measures would yield the same results at any time under the same conditions. (Marvasti; 2004. cited by Yıldırım, 2010) reliability is ensured when different researchers arrive at the same results. Although reliability is based on repetition in quantitative researches, recurrence of incidents with social nature is not possible in qualitative researches regardless of the method used (Balci, 2005; Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2005). As cited by Yıldırım (2010) from Roberts and Priest (2006), the concept of reliability in quantitative researches should be replaced with "trustworthiness". Yıldırım (2010) listed the characteristics of this term as "interpretivist paradigm oriented", "authenticity", "credibility", "transferability", "dependability", "confirmability".

In order to ensure reliability, the below-given points were applied (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2005; Yıldırım, 2010):

- Data collection process was extended to a certain period time. Although the participants live in different cities or even countries, they were interviewed and their opinions were received.
- Data was collected from the participants who administered and implemented the projects, either through face to face interviews or through e-mails if the concerned is abroad or outside the city. Contact information of the relevant people were obtained from the project managers or the communication experts of the project.
- Data of this research was collected by people who had served as communication experts in the previous projects and who had experienced all processes.
- In the description phase which is the first phase of the presentation of the findings of the research, none of the opinions have been missed out.
- In the research, results of the analysis were codified by a project expert and consensus was ensured.
- One of the project reviewers took part in many projects of MoNE and later on worked in the preparation, implementation and evaluation processes of the WB and EU projects in other institutions and therefore, was experienced in national and international projects. Another project reviewer was an academic personnel, who was an expert of data evaluation.
- Parallel and adverse opinions of the participants with different answers to the questions in the data collection instrument have been interpreted separately.
- In interpretations, it has been focused on connections.
- In interpretations, approval-non-approval process has been indicated by referring to detailed citations related with the opinions of the participants.
- Findings and interpretations were also confirmed by various data sources. Glesne and Peshkin (1992) claimed that such kind of a study would support the interpretations of the researcher, would assist in developing different perspectives for the interpretations produced and thus would increase reliability.
- In this research, firstly the interview forms including semi-structured questions were prepared to receive the opinions of the participants who agreed to take part in. These forms enable the collection of data through a certain systemic way, based on the answers of a group of people to the same questions (Kümbetoğlu, 2005). Interview forms were prepared by abstaining from any guidance and by considering the interview environment. These articulate and subject-based forms were also adhered to the subject matter. Semi-structured interviews were utilised as they provide in-depth information about the subject (Akyüz, 2012). Accordingly,

## Findings

Findings of the research obtained through interviews and surveys are limited with the opinions of 98 participants in total, 51 of whom worked in SBEP, 33 in SVET and 14 in MVET under the Ministry of National Education which is a public institution. 58 of the total participants were administrators while 40 were experts. The participants were composed of Turkish and foreign administrators and experts, governing the educational policies as regards the EU within the Ministry of National Education. Senior administrators include deputy undersecretary, relevant general directors, the representative of the European Commission to Turkey, Turkish administrators of the projects carried out under the chairmanship of Projects Coordination Centre within the Ministry of National Education (president and deputies) and foreign team leaders, Turkish and foreign counterparts (procurement specialist, monitoring and evaluation expert, education expert, financial management expert, etc.). Accordingly, this study represents the most comprehensive analysis covering the opinions of both the project experts working in MoNE and the experts contracted outside MoNE.

In Turkey's harmonisation process with the EU, SBEP, SVET and MVTEP financed under the European Union, Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (MEDA) have received grants with highest budgets in the field of education. Following an agreement with the EU, these projects were planned in line with the needs and priorities of MoNE. SVET, MVTEP and SBEP were planned just after beginning of the Basic Education Reform process in 1997, were approved with an agreement in 2000 and began to be implemented in 2002; and they attracted the attention of both national and international private and public institutions at the initial phase and also after the finalisation of the projects. Due to their effects, these projects have been taken as reference in all plans regarding the basic education and vocational education system.

### *Findings regarding SBEP*

The number of participants who took charge in SBEP and who attended interviews or presented opinions in writing within the framework of the research is 51. 36 of them are administrators and 15 of them are experts. 12 out of these 15 experts work in MoNE and 3 are foreigners working in the technical assistance team of the Project. Breakdown of the opinions of the participants regarding SBEP has been presented below (Table 3):

**Table 3.** Breakdown of the opinions of the participants regarding SBEP

SBEP		Administrator (n) (%)	Expert (n) (%)	Total (n) (%)
Whether the opinions of the related units have been received in determining the aims of the Project	Yes	26 (51%)	10 (19.6%)	36 (70.6%)
	Partial	5 (9.8%)	4 (7.8%)	9 (17.6%)
	No	3 (5.9%)	-	3 (5.9%)
	(Unanswered)	2 (4%)	1 (2%)	3 (5.9%)
Functionality of the aims of the project	Yes	28 (54.9%)	10 (19.6%)	38 (74.5%)
	Partial	7 (13.7%)	5 (9.8%)	12 (23.5%)
	No	1 (2%)	-	1 (2%)
	(Unanswered)	-	-	-
Functionality of the structures in terms of the aims of the Project	Yes	26 (51%)	8 (15.7%)	35 (68.6%)
	Partial	8 (15.7%)	7 (13.7%)	14 (27.4%)
	No	2 (4%)	-	2 (4%)
	(Unanswered)	-	-	-
Whether it has been encountered with any problems during the implementation phase of the Project	Yes	18 (35.3%)	9 (17.6%)	27 (52.9%)
	Partial	12 (23.5%)	6 (11.8%)	18 (35.3%)
	No	6 (11.8%)	-	6 (11.8%)
	(Unanswered)	-	-	-
Whether the aims envisaged at the beginning of the Project have been achieved at the end	Yes	21 (41.2%)	9 (17.6%)	30 (58.8%)
	Partial	12 (23.5%)	6 (11.8%)	18 (35.3%)
	No	3 (5.9%)	-	3 (5.9%)
	(Unanswered)	-	-	-
Sustainability of the Project	Yes	25 (49.1%)	11 (21.6%)	36 (70.6%)
	Partial	7 (13.7%)	4 (7.8%)	11 (21.6%)
	No	4 (7.8%)	-	4 (7.8%)
	(Unanswered)	-	-	-

As seen in Table 3, the question whether the opinions of the related units have been received in determining the aims of the project has been answered as “yes” by a total of 36 participants, 26 of whom are administrators and 10 of whom are experts. 9 participants including 5 administrators and 4 experts have stated that the opinions of the related units had been received “partially”. The participating 3 administrators have declared that the opinions of the related units had not been received and the other 3 have not presented any opinion in this regard. When assessed in general terms, 70.6% of the participants have answered the question whether the opinions of the related units have been received or not, as received; 17.6% as received partially; and 5.9% as not received while the rest 5.9% have not presented any opinion.

With regard to the functionality of the aims of SBEP, 28 of the participating administrators and 10 of the experts and thus a total of 38 participants have answered the question as “yes”. 12 participants including 7 administrators and 5 experts have specified the aims as “partially” functional. 1 of the participating administrators has considered that the aims of the Project were non-functional. When assessed in general terms, 74.5% of the participants have specified the aims of the Project as functional, 23.55% as partially functional and 2% as non-functional.



With regard to the structuring in terms of the aims of SBEP, 26 of the participating administrators, and 9 experts and thus a total of 35 participants have answered the question as “yes” and specified that they consider the structuring as functional. 14 participants including 8 administrators and 6 experts have remarked that they consider the structuring in terms of the aims as “partially” functional while 2 of the participating administrators have stated it as non-functional. When assessed in general terms, 68.6% of the participants have assessed the structuring in terms of the aims of the Project as functional, 24.4% as partially functional and approximately 4% as non-functional.

The question whether it has been encountered with any problems during the implementation phase of SBEP has been answered as “yes” by a total of 27 participants, 18 of whom are administrators and 9 of whom are experts. 18 participants including 12 administrators and 6 experts have specified that they had “partially” encountered with problems while 6 participating administrators have stated that they had not encountered with any problems during the implementation phase. When assessed in general terms, 52.9% of the participants have stated that they had encountered with problems during the implementation phase of SBEP, while 35.3% have mentioned that they had encountered with problems “partially”. The rest 11.8% have mentioned that there had been no problems encountered in this phase.

As an answer to the question whether the aims envisaged at the beginning have been achieved at the end of SBEP, 30 participants including 21 administrators and 9 experts stated that the aims planned at the beginning had been realised. 12 of the participating administrators and 6 of the experts, and thus a total of 18 participants have remarked that the envisaged results had “partially” been achieved while 3 of the participating administrators have declared that the results envisaged at the beginning had not been achieved at the end of the project. When assessed in general terms, 58.8% of the participants have declared that the envisaged results had been achieved at the end of SBEP, while 35.3% declared “partial” achievement. The rest 5.9% have stated that the Project had not achieved the envisaged aims.

With regard to the sustainability of SBEP, 25 of the participating administrators and 11 of the experts and thus a total of 36 participants have defined SBEP as sustainable. 11 participants including 7 administrators and 4 experts have declared that SBEP was “partially” sustainable; and 4 of the administrators considered that the Project was unsustainable. When assessed in general terms, 70.6% of the participants found SBEP as sustainable, 21.6% as partially sustainable and 7.8% as unsustainable

#### *Findings regarding SVET*

The number of participants who took charge in SVET and who attended interviews or presented opinions in writing within the framework of the research is 33. 15 of them are administrators and 18 of them are experts. 15 out of these 18 experts work in MoNE and 3 are foreigners working in the technical assistance team of the Project. Breakdown of the opinions of the participants regarding SVET has been presented below (Table 4):

**Table 4.** Breakdown of the opinions of the participants regarding SVET

SVET		Administrator (n) (%)	Expert (n) (%)	Total (n) (%)
Whether the opinions of the related units have been received in determining the aims of the Project	Yes	11 (33.3%)	12 (36.4%)	23 (69.7%)
	Partial	2 (6.1%)	4 (12.1%)	6 (18.2%)
	No	2 (6.1%)	1 (3%)	3 (9.1%)
	(Unanswered)	-	1 (3%)	1 (3%)
Functionality of the aims of the project	Yes	13 (39.4%)	16 (48.5%)	29 (87.8%)
	Partial	2 (6.1%)	2 (6.1%)	4 (12.2%)
	No	-	-	-
	(Unanswered)	-	-	-
Functionality of the structures in terms of the aims of the Project	Yes	10 (30.3%)	11 (33.3%)	21 (63.7%)
	Partial	5 (15.2%)	7 (21.2%)	12 (36.3%)
	No	-	-	-
	(Unanswered)	-	-	-
Whether it has been encountered with any problems during the implementation phase of the Project	Yes	6 (18.2%)	4 (12.1%)	10 (30.3%)
	Partial	7 (21.2%)	13 (39.4%)	20 (60.6%)
	No	2 (6.1%)	1 (3%)	3 (9.1%)
	(Unanswered)	-	-	-
Whether the aims envisaged at the beginning of the Project have been achieved at the end	Yes	10 (30.3%)	14 (42.4%)	24 (72.7%)
	Partial	5 (15.2%)	4 (12.1%)	9 (27.3%)
	No	-	-	-
	(Unanswered)	-	-	-
Sustainability of the Project	Yes	12 (36.4%)	17 (51.5%)	29 (87.8%)
	Partial	2 (6.1%)	1 (3%)	3 (9.1%)
	No	1 (3%)	-	1 (3%)
	(Unanswered)	-	-	-

As seen in Table 4, the question whether the opinions of the related units have been received in determining the aims of SVET has been answered as “yes” by a total of 23 participants, 11 of whom are administrators and 12 of whom are experts. 6 participants including 2 administrators and 4 experts have stated that the opinions of the related units had been received “partially”. The participating 3 administrators have declared that the opinions of the related units had not been received and 1 administrator has not presented any opinion in this regard. When assessed in general terms, 69.7% of the participants have answered the question whether the opinions of the related units have been received or not, as received; 18.2% as received partially; and 9.1% as not received while the rest 3% have not presented any opinion.

With regard to the functionality of the aims of SVET, 13 of the participating administrators and 16 of the experts and thus a total of 29 participants have answered the question as “yes”. 4 participants including 2 administrators and 2 experts have specified the aims as “partially” functional. When assessed in general terms, 87.8% of the participants have specified the aims of the Project as functional, 12.2% as partially functional.

With regard to the structuring in terms of the aims of SVET, 10 of the participating administrators, and 11 experts and thus a total of 21 participants have answered the question as “yes” and specified that they consider the structuring as functional. 12 participants including 5 administrators and 7 experts have remarked that they consider the structuring in terms of the aims as “partially” functional. When assessed in general terms, 63.7% of the participants have assessed the structuring in terms of the aims of the Project as functional, 36.3% as partially functional.

The question whether it has been encountered with any problems during the implementation phase of SVET has been answered as “yes” by a total of 10 participants, 6 of whom are administrators and 4 of whom are experts. 20 participants including 7 administrators and 13 experts have specified that they had “partially” encountered with problems while 3 participants including 2 administrators and 1 expert have stated that they had not encountered with any problems during the implementation phase. When assessed in general terms, 30.3% of the participants have stated that they had encountered with problems during the implementation phase of SVET, while 60.6% have mentioned that they had encountered with problems “partially”. The rest 9.1% have mentioned that there had been no problems encountered in this phase.

As an answer to the question whether the aims envisaged at the beginning have been achieved at the end of SVET, 24 participants including 10 administrators and 14 experts stated that the aims planned at the beginning had been realised. 5 of the participating administrators and 4 of the experts, and thus a total of 9 participants have remarked that the envisaged results had “partially” been achieved. When assessed in general terms, 72.7% of the participants have declared that the envisaged results had been achieved at the end of SVET, while 27.3% declared “partial” achievement.

With regard to the sustainability of SVET, 12 of the participating administrators and 17 of the experts and thus a total of 29 participants have defined SVET as sustainable. 3 participants including 2 administrators and 1 expert have declared that SVET was “partially” sustainable; and 1 of the administrators considered that the Project was unsustainable. When assessed in general terms, 87.8% of the participants found SVET as sustainable, 9.1% as partially sustainable and 3.1% as unsustainable.

#### *Findings regarding MVTEP*

The number of participants who took charge in MVTEP and who attended interviews or presented opinions in writing within the framework of the research is 14. 7 of them are administrators and 7 of them are experts. 2 out of these 7 experts work in MoNE and 5 work in the technical assistance team of the Project. Breakdown of the opinions of the participants regarding MVTEP by certain parameters/dimensions has been presented below:

**Table 5.** Breakdown of the opinions of the participants regarding MVTEP

MVTEP		Administrator (n) (%)	Expert (n) (%)	Total (n) (%)
Whether the opinions of the related units have been received in determining the aims of the Project	Yes	7 (50%)	5 (35.7%)	12 (85.7%)
	Partial	-	2 (14.3%)	2 (14.3%)
	No	-	-	-
	(Unanswered)	-	-	-
Functionality of the aims of the project	Yes	5 (35.7%)	5 (35.7%)	10 (71.4%)
	Partial	2 (14.3%)	1 (7.1%)	3 (21.4%)
	No	-	1 (7.1%)	1 (7.1%)
	(Unanswered)	-	-	-
Functionality of the structures in terms of the aims of the Project	Yes	6 (42.9%)	6 (42.9%)	12 (85.7%)
	Partial	1 (7.1%)	1 (7.1%)	2 (14.3%)
	No	-	-	-
	(Unanswered)	-	-	-
Whether it has been encountered with any problems during the implementation phase of the Project	Yes	3 (%21.4)	2 (14,3%)	5 (35.7%)
	Partial	4 (%28.6)	3 (21.4%)	7 (50%)
	No	-	2 (14.3%)	2 (14.3%)
	(Unanswered)	-	-	-
Whether the aims envisaged at the beginning of the Project have been achieved at the end	Yes	5 (35.7%)	4 (28.6%)	9 (64.3%)
	Partial	2 (14.3%)	1 (7.1%)	3 (21.4%)
	No	-	2 (14.3%)	2 (14.3%)
	(Unanswered)	-	-	-
Sustainability of the Project	Yes	5 (35.7%)	3 (21.4%)	8 (57.1%)
	Partial	2 (14.3%)	3 (21.4%)	5 (35.7%)
	No	-	1 (7.1%)	1 (7.1%)
	(Unanswered)	-	-	-

As seen in Table 5, the question whether the opinions of the related units have been received in determining the aims of MVTEP has been answered as “yes” by a total of 12 participants, 7 of whom are administrators and 5 of whom are experts. 2 participating experts have stated that the opinions of the related units had been received “partially”. When assessed in general terms, 85.7% of the participants have answered the question whether the opinions of the related units have been received or not, as received; 14.3% as received partially.

With regard to the functionality of the aims of MVTEP, 5 of the participating administrators and 5 of the experts and thus a total of 10 participants have answered the question as “yes”. 3 participants including 2 administrators and 2 experts have specified the aims as “partially” functional. 1 of the participating experts has considered that the aims of the Project were non-functional. When assessed in general terms, 71.4% of the participants have specified the aims of the Project as functional, 21.4% as partially functional and 7.2% as non-functional.

With regard to the structuring in terms of the aims of MVTEP, 6 of the participating administrators, and 6 experts and thus a total of 12 participants have answered the question as “yes” and specified that they consider the structuring as functional. 2 participants including 1 administrator and 1 expert have remarked that they consider the structuring in terms of the aims as “partially”

functional. When assessed in general terms, 85.7% of the participants have assessed the structuring in terms of the aims of the Project as functional, 14.3% as partially functional.

The question whether it has been encountered with any problems during the implementation phase of MVTEP has been answered as “yes” by a total of 5 participants, 3 of whom are administrators and 2 of whom are experts. 7 participants including 4 administrators and 3 experts have specified that they had “partially” encountered with problems while 2 participating experts have stated that they had not encountered with any problems during the implementation phase. When assessed in general terms, 35.7% of the participants have stated that they had encountered with problems during the implementation phase of MVTEP, while 50% have mentioned that they had encountered with problems “partially”. The rest 14.3% have mentioned that there had been no problems encountered in this phase.

As an answer to the question whether the aims envisaged at the beginning have been achieved at the end of MVTEP, 9 participants including 5 administrators and 4 experts stated that the aims planned at the beginning had been realised. 2 of the participating administrators and 1 of the experts, and thus a total of 3 participants have remarked that the envisaged results had “partially” been achieved while 2 of the participating experts have declared that the results envisaged at the beginning had not been achieved at the end of the project. When assessed in general terms, 64.3% of the participants have declared that the envisaged results had been achieved at the end of MVTEP, while 21.4% declared “partial” achievement. The rest 14.3% have stated that the Project had not achieved the envisaged aims.

With regard to the sustainability of MVTEP, 5 of the participating administrators and 3 of the experts and thus a total of 8 participants have defined MVTEP as sustainable. 5 participants including 2 administrators and 3 experts have declared that MVTEP was “partially” sustainable; and 1 of the experts considered that the Project was unsustainable. When assessed in general terms, 57.1% of the participants found MVTEP as sustainable, 35.7% as partially sustainable and 7.2% as unsustainable.

## Discussion

Although SBEP, SVET and MVET are referred as projects, when their scopes and effects are considered, they are in fact programmes uniting many projects. In the analysis of them, researches concentrating on a single aspect have a negative effect in understanding the whole purpose of the project. Another important feature of a holistic perspective is that the positive effects of these projects on Turkey’s accession process to the EU, on the change of paradigms in vocational education and also on ensuring a collaborative work between the state and the business world can be seen clearly.

Various researches have been made concerning the subject matter of this study. However, only the most relevant ones are analysed here. When the research by Topsakal (2003), Anıl (2006), Özaşık (2007), Akın (2008) and Demir (2011) are examined, it is generally observed that Leonardo da Vinci Vocational Education Projects under the Life Long Learning Programme carried out by the Centre for European Union Education and Youth Programmes in Turkey is addressed. In these researches, it has been focused on the contributions of the mentioned projects to the vocational, social and personal developments and employability of the project participants as well as to the collaboration of the vocational education institutions with the related parties.

When the researches of Saraçoğlu (2007), Buğday (2007), Kamber (2007), Yıldız (2008), Gelişli (2009) and Uysal (2009), Tosun (2010) are examined, it is seen that they present an overall introduction of Support to Basic Education Program (SBEP), Strengthening Vocational Education and Training Project (SVET), and Modernisation of the Vocational and Technical Education Project (MVET) implemented by the Ministry of National education between 2002 and 2007 together with other small-scale programmes supported by the EU.

Researches examining a single aspect of SBEP, SVET and MVET are chronically as follows: Yavnik (2006). Implementation opportunities of the curricula developed under SBEP; Bıkmaz (2006):



new elementary school curricula developed under SBEP and teachers; Gündoğdu (2006): examination of the vocational competencies of music teachers; Kara (2007): competencies of class teachers; Kürkçü (2007): success levels and reasons of failure of the students included in or excluded from MVET.

However, EU education projects with high budgets and which were implemented under MoNE have not been addressed in any study in terms of their aspects affecting the Turkish educational policy. Particularly, EU-funded SBEP, SVET and MVET have not been assessed with regard to their purpose, process, outcome and sustainability dimensions. Considering all these above, it has been observed that SBEP with a budget of 100 million Euros, SVET with a budget of 58.2 million Euros and MVET with a budget of 18.5 million Euros have a great potential and effect on the development of Turkish Education System with reference to their purpose and budgets.

At the end of SBEP, SVET and MVET, the EU had impact assessments made for each and tried to assess their effects. Among these are Technical Support for Impact Assessment of Support to Basic Education (SBEP, 2009); Technical Support for Impact Assessment of Strengthening Vocational Education and Training Project (SVET, 2009); and Impact Assessment Analytical Report of Modernisation of the Vocational and Technical Education Project (MVET, 2007) by the Project Coordination Centre of the Ministry of Education. There is no similar international research.

Having multi-dimensional preliminary reasons, effects and results, SBEP, SVET and MVTEP are some of the EU funded grant schemes with high budgets carried out by the Ministry of National Education. These projects have been addressed in terms of their aims, implementation processes, their results and sustainability.

In general, administrators and experts have noted that the structuring of SBEP, SVET and MVTEP in terms of the aims of the project were functional. This has been justified by the fact that participation of the related general directorates or institutions of MoNE to the monthly board meetings or to the annual steering committee meetings increases the functionality of the structuring of the project. However, some of the administrators and experts have pointed to the greatness of the projects, and the accompanying difficulties, exclusion of provincial teams from the joint work, frequent changes in the project team, inexperience of the team, and lack of coordination among the related units. Moreover, it has been specified that the project results display the achievement of the aims, which has also been proved by the impact assessments of the related independent organisations. In addition, participants mentioned the measurable progress of Turkey in international PISA and TIMMS tests.

Administrators and experts have commonly declared that some problems had been encountered during the implementation phases of SBEP, SVET and MVTEP, but they were solved in time. As SBEP, and SVET were long term projects covering between 2002 and 2007, it was occasionally necessary to make changes on them. Therefore, some delays were experienced in the implementation of the project activities. Initially, there had been serious resistance against the projects by the partners both from and outside MoNE. It has also been faced with some difficulties in employing the people to work full time as a representative of MoNE and permanent personnel with a good knowledge of foreign languages. At the initial phase, lack of experienced personnel who had previously worked in projects led to loss of time. Some of the proposed foreign experts were found out to be incapable for the projects and changes were requested; but this caused waste of time and work. Existence of several responsible units for the decision mechanism in MoNE impeded the decision making process.

Administrators and experts have generally stated that the results envisaged for SBEP, SVET and MVTEP had been achieved. These three projects have been specified as successful as a result of an impact survey carried out by an independent organisation for the EU. As new activities were inserted to the projects due to the strategy changes of MoNE, some of the activities could not be realised. However, there has not been a great deviation in the planned major aims. In general, primary education curriculum and training materials were developed under SBEP; and under SVET, information regarding the labour market in Turkey was gathered and analysed for the first time through the Labour Market and Skills Needs Analysis Survey during the formation of vocational

education curriculum. Moreover, SBEP, SVET and MVTEP have contributed to the realisation of the commitments given within the framework of the EU membership in the field of Fundamental Human Rights and Education and Culture chapter. Turkish Government's determined stance for the education reform has contributed significantly to the achievement of European Union norms and to the membership process. Additionally, these projects enabled the meeting of the partners who will form the mutual working culture both in Turkey and in the European Union. Through SBEP, SVET and MVTEP, MoNE had the opportunity to discuss basic education, vocational education and higher education topics in the same platform with non-governmental organisations, and other related public institutions. Within the framework of SBEP, SVET and MVTEP, several policy papers that will serve as an important benchmark and step for the re-structuring of vocational and technical education and basic educational policies have been drafted.

In terms of their aims, practices and results, SBEP, SVET and MVTEP were sustainable projects to a great extent. SBEP, SVET and MVTEP served as a basis for the following EU funded projects such as Life Long Learning, Strengthening Pre-School Education, and Support to Human Resources Development through Vocational Education and Training, and Quality Assurance in Turkey. Modular programs and Basic Education Curriculum developed through SBEP, SVET and MVTEP are flexible, open, economical, feasible, can be used with various groups and also highlight individual learning. SBEP, SVET and MVTEP have been cited in all the national and international documents regarding the planning on vocational education and education system.

With the projects of MoNE, financed under EU-funded Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (MEDA) and Pre-accession Financial Assistance (IPA), non-governmental organisations have firstly been included in boards and steering committees and have taken the floor. Through SBEP, SVET and MVTEP, several policy papers have been drafted. Accordingly, Lifelong Learning Strategy Paper, Lifelong Learning Policy Paper, Vocational Education and Training Strategy Paper, and Improvement of Social Partnership in Vocational Education and Training Policy Papers have later on become the main reference documents of Turkish Educational Policy.

With regard to the problems experienced between the labour market and the vocational education that have been discussed in Turkey for long years, SVET and MVTEP has served as a road map in terms of the EU standards and also as a reference point. Under SVET, modules for vocational education have been developed, training programs have been revised, high schools have become four years, organisations such as Vocational Qualifications Authority have been established, working culture has been shaped in non-governmental organisations and Professional organisations by including them in the activities in accordance with the EU legislation and Project planning (ERG, Mesleki Eğitim, 2012). Both the administrators and the experts stated that labour market analysis made under the scope of SVET had closed a great gap between the MoNE and the sector in Turkey.

Through MVTEP financed under European Union, Euro-Mediterranean Partnership Programme (MEDA), it has been aimed to increase the capacity for the establishment and development of a modern and effective teacher training system, and also to promote the regional partnerships to be established among vocational and technical education faculties, vocational schools, social partners, and organisations and institutions of vocational and technical foundations. Within the framework of this Project, field qualifications of the teachers of vocational education, especially in nine fields, have been determined (ERG, Mesleki Eğitim, 2012).

In the Green Paper drafted at the end of the EU funded Project for the Capacity Building Support for the Ministry of National Education (MEBGE), it has been mentioned that reform efforts towards the European Union has been catalysed through projects such as SBEP, SVET and MVTEP. These projects have supported the development and implementation of the national LLL policies in line with the Lisbon Strategy objectives. Priorities adopted during Copenhagen and Bologna process served as a guideline and outlined the basic strategy for the reform of education and training system (MEBGE, Green Paper, 2010, 18). Studies and reports of organisations such as OECD, World Bank

and European Union serve as a guide in the field of education policies. It has been witnessed that sometimes, especially in the economic crisis periods, international organisations exerted effort to highlight their own priorities/policies. During these negotiations, political priorities and economic power of that state had been the determinant parameters.

With regard to the international training projects between Turkey and the EU, EU fully funded the projects under MEDA, while the projects under IPA have received a grant of %80 and %90. Some of these resources have returned back to the EU, due to the condition that the projects should employ experts from the EU and that EU-origin goods should be procured. As of 2000, Turkey encouraged Turkish experts to work as counterparts with the foreign experts in projects and also to share experience. Moreover, Turkey winnowed the experts incapable for the projects. In time, MoNE removed the condition of employing foreign nationality experts and assigned Turkish experts with international experience and therefore enabled the transfer of experiences.

### **Results and Suggestions**

This section includes the results based on the research findings and suggestions made accordingly. Results based on the research findings have given below.

European Union funded SBEP, SVET and MVTEP have supported the development and implementation of national lifelong learning policies in line with the Lisbon strategy objectives.

As the preparation process of the projects under Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (MEDA) is long, needs of the ministry and priorities of the administrators have changed in time. EU funded SBEP, SVET and MVTEP were prepared within the framework of high-level policy and strategy papers of Turkey, in consistence with the target audience of the project, and according to the opinions of the related units of MoNE, representatives of the participating organisations, other ministries and institutions and also the non-governmental organisations.

In general, EU funded SBEP, SVET and MVTEP have provided the targeted educational support for the educational institutions, human resources, training programmes and materials; and also increased the institutional capacity. Outcomes of these projects have been disseminated nationwide. Moreover, these projects have assumed an important mission in terms of their effects on the change of vision and because of being the first under the institutional organisation of MoNE.

Changes of position of the administrators who took charge in SBEP, SVET and MVTEP had a negative effect on the project performances. Strengths and weaknesses of these projects were observed. In general, partners' embracing the projects, well-prepared terms of reference and aims, sufficient budget are among the strengths of the projects while long term durations, inclusion of quite different components, procurement procedures in terms of the legislation, lack of experienced personnel, and the difficulties experienced in ensuring sustainability by local authorities can be listed among the weaknesses. Respective budgets of SBEP, SVET and MVTEP were also used for R&D activities necessary for MoNE.

Suggestions made according to the results of the research have been presented below:

European Union does not oblige member states to adopt standard rules in the field of education but proposes prospective policies in line with the vision papers. Therefore, an interventionist method should not be adopted for training projects. As a beneficiary country, Turkey should plan its financial resources with its own experts in line with its top papers and needs and also the top papers of the European Union.

Projects should only be approved by the education sector unit of the Delegation of the European Union to Turkey. Brussels and other intermediary units should not be involved in the approval process. Otherwise, unnecessary delays and bureaucratic problems are experienced. The implementation process of the projects should only be carried out by the Turkish administrators and experts. Foreign experts have limited contribution to the projects as they do not know the conditions in Turkey and as they face with adaptation problems. Besides, the cost of hiring foreign experts is high. Support of the European Union should be received as short term technical and academics consultancy.

When it is necessary to make changes in the activities depending on the conditions during the implementation phase, they should be realised following the approval of the high level authorities of Turkey. Inclusion of EU units harms flexibility and leads to loss of time. The only addressee of the projects should be the MoNE implementing the projects. Proceedings in the intermediary organisations such as Central Finance and Contracts Unit and Operating Structure cause waste of time. Approval of the Delegation of the European Union to Turkey should be considered as sufficient. Preparation process and the initiation period of the project should not exceed one year, as then, the envisaged aims may no longer be topical and the expected impact cannot be ensured. Therefore, selection and contracting process should be carried out by MoNE and Delegation of the European Union to Turkey should act as an observer.

Experiences and qualifications of foreign experts vary just like the differences in the potentials of Turkish experts. Therefore, the decision makers should be careful in selecting foreign experts and give sound decisions on the basis of long term surveys/interviews.

Researchers working in this field should have some basic information about the projects:

What is a project and what is its scope? How are the preparation and implementation processes of national and international projects? Which organization provides funding for the addressed project and what are the working procedures of this organization? What are the features of international financing institutions and their founding objectives? When did the preparations for the addressed project start and where was the project implemented? Does the project have a political aspect? Do the addressed projects affect high level policy papers (Council decisions, Development Plans, etc.)?

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