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Sustainable Development through Lifelong Learning: A Good Practice about Women Entrepreneurship from Turkey

Abstract: Women form half of the world's population, but the same cannot be said for their active participation in economic development. Sustainable, strong economies can be achieved through equally active involvement in the process by developing or keeping up to date the skills of individuals in society. This paper focuses on women's contribution to sustainable development as entrepreneurs through Lifelong Learning. The paper consists of two sections. The first section discusses the relationship between accessibility to digital age-appropriate education and sustainable development in Lifelong Learning. The second section is a good practice of the impact of the "Women First in Entrepreneurship" project on developing women's entrepreneurship. It covers the reasons for the project and its implementation process, outputs, and impact. To increase women's participation in the labor market as part of sustainable development in today's economy, the project, which began in 10 pilot provinces, is currently being implemented across Turkey. The project has been implemented under the coordination of the Turkish Directorate General for Lifelong Learning since 2015. The General Directorate of Lifelong Learning is the highest policymaking authority in Turkey to strengthen the adult education system.

Key words: women entrepreneurship, lifelong learning, sustainable development, digital access.

Introduction

Education is the most decisive factor in a country's development. Improving the welfare of individuals living in society, improving their socio-cultural status, equipping individuals with the skills required by rapidly changing technology can only be achieved through education. Education increases the socio-cultural

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levels of communities and enables them to keep up with the new skills needed by business life, which also develops in line with the continually changing information-communication technology. From this point of view, increasing the competencies of individuals who are not within the formal education system is crucial to countries' social development to achieve their sustainable development goals. Therefore, it would not be wrong to suggest that its level of education measures the country's level of development.

The European Union's 2020 Education strategy document (ET, 2020) is based on information and innovation, sustainable economy, increased employment, and social engagement, and has made these issues a priority for society's development. It also emphasizes that lifelong Learning should be used as a tool to ensure that the stated priorities meet the objectives. Therefore, developed countries have made Lifelong Learning a policy basis to promote social development and positive change and to promote sustainable development by enabling individuals to refresh their existing knowledge and skills.

The main objective of the Lifelong Learning approach is to ensure the development of the socio-economic life of both individuals and the society in which they live. From this perspective, a culture of Lifelong Learning will enable the development of human resources that will be or are employed, and in this way, support the sustainability of national economic growth (Samancı, 2017).

In recent years, women, who are more active in the labor market and engaged in entrepreneurial activities, have "strategic" importance for developing economies (Serel, 2017). It is said that women's entrepreneurship needs to be encouraged by academic circles in the business world to mobilize the unutilized potential in the business world and create ways for new jobs (The Republic of Turkey, 2019). Today, economic, social, and technological developments worldwide have increasingly led to more women actively participating in work life. According to the World Population Prospect 2019 (OECD, 2018) report, there are an average of 3 billion 889 thousand men and 3 billion 825 thousand women in the world. The OECD. STAT 2018 employment/population rate data by gender and age group gives the employment average in the OECD countries as 65.5% in men and 49.6% in women (OECD, 2018). The data shows that the population distribution by gender is equal, but that the employment participation lacks the same equilibrium in that the male employment rate is 15.9% higher than the female employment rate. Although women make up half of the world's population, they are not represented in the economy proportionately. Underutilizing the human resources that form half

of the population in terms of potential labor, knowledge, skills, and experience without benefiting both the country's economy and the family economy is a severe loss. One of the most important reasons for this loss is that women cannot access information and support related to work-life and entrepreneurship before entering work life as a female entrepreneur.

However, the dazzling development of information and communication technology makes education easily accessible regardless of time and place. Distance learning platforms and mobile educational apps deliver information much faster. Involving women in Lifelong Learning is the easiest and most effective way to make it easier for them to access the information they need when entering into work life.

According to the 2018 Eurostat data (EU, 2019), Turkey is a high-to-medium income country with a population of 81.258 million. 52.08% of this population consists of adults aged 25–64. When we look at gender ratios in the total population, 50.1% of the total population consists of men and 49.9% of the population consists of women. According to the picture drawn for Turkey by the OECD. Stat 2018 employment/population rate data by gender and age group, the employment rate of men is 65.7% and that of women is 29.4% (Eurostat, 2018). According to the employment rate by gender on a country basis, the employment rate difference between women and men is 36.3%. According to the comparison of average female employment in the OECD countries and average female employment by country, Turkey's female employment rate is 13.3% lower than the OECD average. From the general numerical framework, the population rates of women and men are almost equal within the total population. However, the employment rate, unfortunately, does not draw a good picture of women's participation in work life. In order to show the current global situation in access to education in light of the indicators, the OECD Centre for Educational Research and Innovation's (CERI) *Report on Educational Opportunity for All: Overcoming Lifelong Inequality* points to adult education (The Republic of Turkey, 2019). The report focuses on the ever-growing gap between socio-economic classes worldwide and on increasing accessibility of adults to educational opportunities as a solution to closing this gap.

As a key message, the *Third Global Report on Adult Learning and Education* (UNESCO, 2016) refers to the impact of adult education on health and well-being, employment and labor market and society, citizenship and social life. The report generated by the United Nations UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning from the participation in the monitoring survey of 139 member states is prepared every three years. This report states that Lifelong Learning is the key

component and lead actor of the 2030 agenda in ensuring sustainable development (UN, 2019). The report provides an overview of the various positive benefits that Lifelong Learning can bring to individuals, employers, and economies, and presents its benefits to the labor market through evidence-based good practices. The report also highlights a global technological change, as well as a demographic shift in the country's population. It also discusses another striking result of the research: that individuals need information and guidance in order to create a solid-based society and have the population keep up with these changes. Based on research on the impact of adult education on economic development, lifelong learning programs contribute positively to developing individuals as well as institutional and socio-economic structure (Korkmaz, 2019). As for individual effects, it increases employability, facilitates career steps, and keeps professional competencies up to date. Institutional impact increases employee satisfaction, ensures workforce stability, and ensures employee alignment with evolving technology. In terms of socio-economic impact, it helps strengthen the economy, increases the labor market's functionality, and increases entrepreneurship activities along with the number of entrepreneurs in the sector. In view of the broader benefits, it has positive impacts such as increasing employment, strengthening the economy of households and the country, increasing the level of prosperity, and increasing human resources' quality as the main elements of sustainable development. According to the results of the GRALE III monitoring survey (UNESCO, 2016), the global perspective shows that adult education is directly proportional to the labor market and socio-economic growth. From Figure 1, it appears that member states participating in the monitoring survey agree that adult education has a strong and medium positive impact on individuals in increasing productivity and employment. On the other hand, 15% of the surveyed countries do not know the effects of adult education. Therefore, greater efforts are needed to raise awareness of adult education.

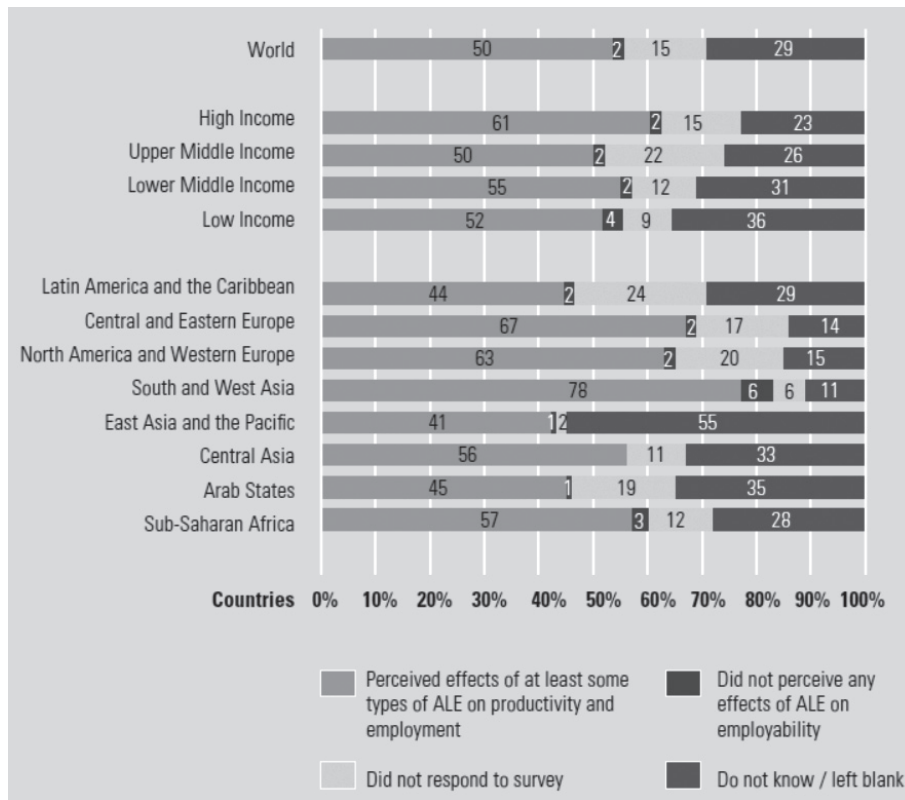


Figure 1. UNESCO, Grale III, 2016 Monitoring report, ALE’s contribution to productivity and employment

Method

In the present research, the personal experience-based method was used in addition to the document review technique. The document review technique used in the first section summarizes research dealing with the impact of Lifelong Learning on sustainable development and the importance of women in achieving sustainable development by developing their entrepreneurial skills through non-formal education. Besides, Turkey’s national top policy documents were reviewed, which study the importance of developing entrepreneurial skills in women through Lifelong Learning, increasing female employment, and empowering women socio-culturally. Following the first section’s research, the data obtained

is summarized and interpreted. The following are the national top policy documents used during the research phase of section one.

1. 10th Development Plan (Presidency of Turkey, 2014–2018)
2. Lifelong Learning Strategy Document (EPALE, 2018)
3. Specialization Commission Report on Women’s Role in Development (The Republic of Turkey, 2019)
4. The Ministry of National Education 2023 Education Vision (MoNE, 2018b)

The second section summarizes the author’s personal knowledge and experience acquired in two years as a district entrepreneurship counselor and county project coordinator in the “Women First in Entrepreneurship Project.” In the section discussing the impacts of the project in section two, the national documents, international documents, and the views of the women involved in the project are reviewed, summarized, and discussed, allowing the reader to look at it from the eyes of those who have experienced it.

Policy Documents

The common goal of policy documents prepared to be implemented nationwide is to increase individuals’ knowledge and competence based on a Lifelong Learning approach, to increase employment rates, and to ensure sustainable development. The policy documents section of the research will provide an overview of policy documents related to promoting sustainable development in Turkey through Lifelong Learning and the role of female employment in sustainable development. The documents covered in the section are used as top Turkish policy documents, and the priorities discussed in the documents are based on a Lifelong Learning approach.

10th Development Plan

The Tenth Development Plan states that the increased level of women’s participation in work and social life, mainly through non-formal education, is one of the key factors that will affect countries’ economic and social development (Korkmaz, 2019). It also notes that Turkey has the potential to make the most of its demographic opportunity if education and industry cooperation policies for qualified human power are strengthened by measures to increase the participation of women in the workforce (Presidency of Turkey, 2014–2018).

In line with these findings, the plan aims to promote Lifelong Learning and produce individuals equipped with entrepreneurial skills, particularly the fundamental knowledge and skills required by the information society, through Lifelong Learning and to improve the skills of the existing human resources accordingly. The development plan aims to set policies and to develop both formal and non-formal education accordingly to achieve the stated objectives. Some of the 10th Development Plan policies for promoting sustainable development through Lifelong Learning and developing an entrepreneurship culture for increasing women's employment are briefly summarized below.

- Developing personal and professional skills of individuals that are part of the education system, addressing quality-focused training that strengthens alignment with the labor market by the approach of Lifelong Learning;
- Strengthening the information and communications technology infrastructure of both non-formal educational institutions and the formal education system and ensuring that technology is integrated into all levels of education;
- Working to ensure the adoption of entrepreneurship culture by aligning the education system with the labor market in line with the Lifelong Learning perspective;
- Preparing formal and non-formal education programs to develop entrepreneurship in all levels of education, improving the quality of entrepreneurship training, promoting entrepreneurial role models, and generalizing practices aimed to reward entrepreneurial role models;
- Strengthening the cooperative ties between institutions and organizations in the entrepreneurship education ecosystem;
- Giving priority to women in entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship and thus increasing employment;
- Ensuring the transfer of technology to education in improving the quality of entrepreneurship training;
- Supporting entrepreneurship culture with professional competencies by integrating the National Competency Framework into non-formal education competencies;
- Diversifying adult learning opportunities, encouraging their lifelong learning activities,
- Strengthening the role of women in social, cultural, and economic life through non-formal education;
- Strengthening the mechanisms necessary to promote women's participation in the workforce, especially through education.

Developing the non-formal education system within the education system and using the lifelong learning culture as a tool for sustainable social development. In this context, the goal of development plans can be summarized as giving priority to women, who account for half of the total population, through Lifelong Learning to support sustainable development.

Strategy Document for Lifelong Learning (2014–2018)

According to the Eurostat criteria, data on the participation in Lifelong Learning in Turkey is calculated by the Turkish Statistical Institute (Eurostat, 2018), taking into account the age range of 25–64. According to the TURKSTAT 2018 data, the participation rate of the population aged 25–64 in adult education is 6.2% (MoNE, 2018a). According to the Eurostat 2018 data, the European Union's average participation rate in adult education is 11.1%. A comparison of the data shows that Turkey's lifelong learning participation rate appears to be 4.9% below the European average (Fig. 2).

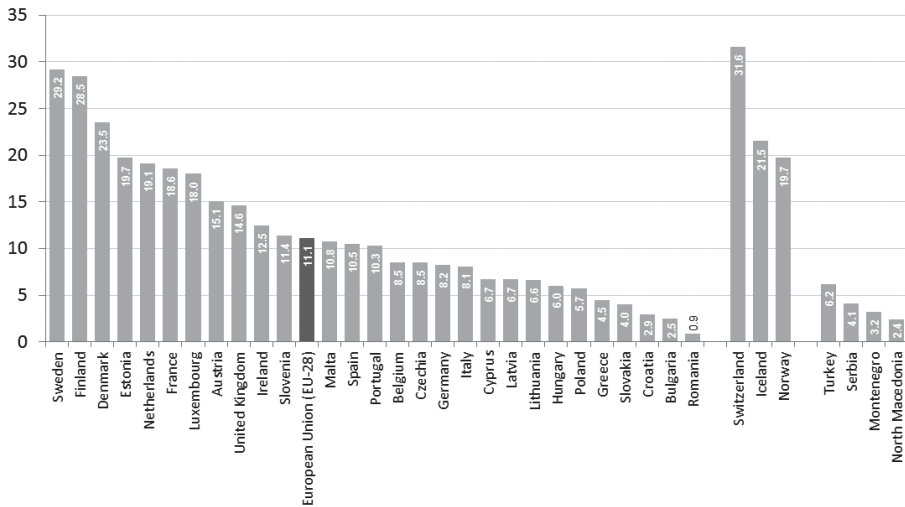


Figure 2. Adult education participation rates, 2018 (% of population aged 25–64)

An LLL strategy document is being prepared every four years to systematically improve the effectiveness and quality of Lifelong Learning in Turkey (EPALE, 2018). The General Directorate of Lifelong Learning is the national

policymaker and public authority in achieving the objectives set out in the strategy document and for Lifelong Learning. The purpose of this strategy document is to “create and make operational and sustainable a lifelong learning system that can meet the needs and expectations of Turkish society.” In this context, Lifelong Learning aims to improve the employability of individuals at different levels of education and age in society through Lifelong Learning and to enable social transformation by developing their knowledge, skills, and competencies to support their socio-cultural development. The *Strategy Document for Lifelong Learning*, implemented between 2014–2018, consists of six main priorities. These priorities were prepared to create a Lifelong Learning culture in the overall framework. It enables the measures included in the Tenth Development Plan, which was prepared in the same period. Therefore, through a Lifelong Learning approach, which is the central theme of the Tenth Development Plan in education, it is envisaged to develop human resources, increase employment, and achieve sustainable development.

Based on this vision, there are 3,583 courses prepared by the Directorate General for Lifelong Learning in 76 different learning areas (MoNE, 2018a, 2019). These programs are implemented through training courses opened at 987 Public Education Centers, which provide non-formal educational services across Turkey. The programs prepared are intended for all individuals who study at any educational level or who are not part of the education system and not employed, or not employed but willing to develop their socio-cultural-professional skills. The programs are structured based on developing knowledge and skills and on developing individuals’ socio-cultural skills to achieve social inclusion.

According to the *2018 Lifelong Learning Monitoring – Assessment Report*, a total of 430,579 courses were opened, including general and professional technical training courses, enrolling 8,364,663 trainees (MoNE, 2018a). The ratio of male trainees in the total number of trainees is 39% and that of female trainees is 61%. Based on age groups and gender, the age group with the highest participation rate is age group 23–44 with 3,165,938. The number of female trainees in this age range is 2,986,079, more than twice the number of male trainees. According to the ranking of programs preferred by the trainees currently taking these courses, the courses that support professional development and employment are most preferred, followed by training courses related to personal development. However, one of the most fragile and important issues in adult education is the recognition of previous learning. Recognition of previous learning is the documentation, through measurement and assessment, of individuals who are currently employed and have more skills than formal education competencies. This process is carried out under the coordination of the General Directorate of Lifelong Learning.

*The Specialization Commission Report on Women's Role
in Development*

This report was prepared by a specialization commission to strengthen the Turkish economy, to include women, who make up half of the total population of our country, in the process, to integrate them into the economy, and to take measures to uncover their potential (The Republic of Turkey, 2019). The education-employment, technology, and digital economy headings of the report, which consists of six key topics, are about contributing to sustainable development by strengthening women's status through direct Lifelong Learning. The report's starting point is to provide input to the national action plan that will contribute to the achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (UN, 2019). It was prepared with the slogan "Leave No One Behind," including the Fourth Goal; "quality education for all," Fifth Goal: "eliminating all discrimination against women."

The main goal of sustainable development is to ensure a healthy, decent, and comfortable life for individuals who make up society; its focus is on individuals. Therefore, reducing poverty and having all segments of society share in prosperity by participating in the production process are a must for sustainable development. The report states that women's employment is directly related to education, and countries' educational policies should be strengthened in this direction through a global current situation analysis. The analysis of the current situation is based on the OECD Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI) *Educational Opportunity for All* report, the ILO *2017 World Employment Report*, and the report prepared by the UNESCO Statistics Institute (the Republic of Turkey, 2019). According to the data derived from the reports, the most significant common characteristic of countries with poor educational performance is that they neglect to generalize education across society. In other words, they fail to fully integrate Lifelong Learning culture into the national education system. One of the most important points of attention in the report is developing entrepreneurial skills in women to achieve women's sustainable development objectives and generalize the level of prosperity across the entire society. In 2015, a study was conducted by the McKinsey Global Institute on the contribution of women to economic growth (The Republic of Turkey, 2019). According to the study, if women's participation in employment is equal to that of men, the global gross product will increase by 26% by 2025. Therefore, the participation of women in the economic development process is essential to ensuring countries' sustainable economic growth. In this context, it must be ensured that gender-

based discrimination in the sector be eliminated and that women's competencies be improved through Lifelong Learning to support technological development.

According to the *Specialization Commission Report on the Role of Women in Development*, entrepreneurship in women through education is a crucial factor in the development process. Focusing solely on male entrepreneurs is the wrong strategy. According to Schumpeter (1911), entrepreneurship means not involving the other half of the population in the economic growth process (The Republic of Turkey, 2019). In this context, the General Directorate of Status of Women of the Ministry of Family and Social Policies has prepared a *Strategy Document and Action Plan for Empowering Women*, covering 2018–2023 (AÇSHB, 2018–2023). This action plan states that women's entrepreneurship is considered a key component of economic growth in an increasingly competitive environment driven by globalization. Therefore, it is important to promote Turkey's socio-economic development in the competitive system, to increase entrepreneurship in women in a numerical, qualitative way, and to strengthen their entrepreneurship skills through education. The report argues that there are barriers to women's use of the Internet and information and communication technologies, noting that this area's greatest shortfall is knowledge and education. The report outlines several measures to address this lack of knowledge and education, suggesting that the non-formal education approach is the strongest tool to overcome the stated barriers. Below are the highlights of the proposed package to support women's participation in the work-life, increasing their contribution to both the household and the country's economy.

- Removing the barriers to the lack of information on incentives to increase women's employment and entrepreneurship and ensuring continuity in the flow of information;
- Taking into account the development of entrepreneurial skills of women not only in cities but also in rural areas;
- Providing the training required for women to participate in the digital economy through non-formal education;
- Strengthening the private education sector and NGO cooperation in creating and implementing female employment policies;
- Providing professional education through Lifelong Learning to increase qualified female employment in the labor market and ensuring skills development;
- Providing knowledge and communication skills matching the 21st-century competencies and requirements;
- Implementing programs that enable female entrepreneurs to use digital technology effectively through public education centers, and providing financial literacy and e-commerce awareness;

- Raising awareness of role-model stories to increase the number of female entrepreneurs and ensuring that such role models become an inspiration.

In conclusion, a human resources management that ensures a quality work-life balance in women who participate in the development process and contribute to the development of the economy of not just the household but also the country is possible only through education.

The Ministry of National Education 2023 Education Vision

The 2023 vision document prepared by the Ministry of National Education is the strategy document prepared in 2018 (MoNE, 2018b). The document consists of a roadmap for all tiers of the education system, offering a stronger future vision through higher-quality education. The main purpose of the document, which was prepared based on the needs of the information age, is to educate skilled and ethical individuals who are interested in culture and willing to use their current and future skills for the benefit of humanity. The document states that education is the most powerful tool for creating a strong economic structure and a sound social structure. The focus is not only on students; objectives are also set for the educational needs of administrators, teachers, and parents, who are the key actors of education. The vision document, which addresses the development of every tier of the education system and all actors, also contains Lifelong Learning strategies from the perspective of education for all. This means that through a holistic approach for a stronger tomorrow, the document emphasizes improving the Lifelong Learning system with a primary purpose and nine sub-goals under a separate heading.

The main goal of “increasing quality in and access to lifelong learning programs” has been determined considering the social-professional development of all ages and all society segments starting from early childhood education. The vision also set a sub-goal of updating the social-cultural-professional programs to support development in society’s core structure, update the skills of the individuals, or support them to acquire new skills. The strengthening of social structure through education is crucial in ensuring sustainable development, considering all socio-cultural-professional factors. This phenomenon also leads to the need for all stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations, professional organizations, universities, and public institutions, to collaborate for education. Based on this requirement, strengthening collaborations between institutions and

organizations has been set as another sub-goal in order to generalize education across all segments of society.

The rapid development of technology and changing values affect individuals' social and work lives, requiring them to continually update their skills. To have a strong economy, to strengthen social structure, to ensure social inclusion for all segments of society, and to keep up with the changing values of the 21st century, it is necessary to generalize the 21st-century skills across all segments of the community. Another sub-goal set based on the fact that LLL interests all segments of society is to generalize the 21st-century skills of financial, digital, health, and social media literacy training. In line with the development of technology, every aspect of life is quickly digitized at an astonishing speed, bringing with it the necessity of making changes to the structure of education. In education, digitization has an important place to reach different audiences and to increase learning diversity by giving access to learning. For this reason, the use of remote education technologies within the lifetime learning system is an effective way of increasing the rate of participation in Lifelong Learning and developing human resources. Therefore, the Lifelong Learning system needs to keep up with digitalization as well. In this context, in the Lifelong Learning approach, integrating remote education technologies into the Lifelong Learning system, was set as another sub-goal to diversify and increase the audience.

The Women First in Entrepreneurship Project

The Women First in Entrepreneurship Project started in partnership with the Turkish Information Foundation and Turkish Vodafone Foundation under the MoNE General Directorate's coordination of Lifelong Learning (Learning, 2020). The project was initiated to encourage women's economic-social empowerment and to improve their education and welfare level. Launched in 2015 as a pilot implementation in 10 provinces in Turkey, the project was launched nationwide, covering 987 Public Education Centers in 81 provinces in 2019 (Foundation, 2019). Its starting point is empowering women in socio-economic terms, and its unique objectives are as follows.

- Facilitating the sale of the handicrafts produced by female trainees in the public education centers via the innovations introduced by digital technology;
- Ensuring that the products produced by women in professional and socio-cultural courses started for recreational purposes are transformed into an income-generating activity;

- Promoting the participation of non-professional women in economic life as freelance entrepreneurs by developing their entrepreneurial skills;
- Creating opportunities for them to gain additional income, increasing the household's welfare through free entrepreneurship activities.

The Women First in Entrepreneurship Project consists of four main activities and a series of sub-activities, which are briefly described below.

A1. Preparation of the counselor and trainee training programs kit

The Project Implementation Guidelines prepared for use in the project were prepared and sent to 100 entrepreneurial counselors working at the public education centers in 10 provinces. In addition, all training materials that entrepreneurship counselors will use in training women were prepared by the Directorate General for Lifelong Learning and sent to the entrepreneurial counselors in 10 pilot provinces.

A2. Entrepreneurship counselors' training (training the trainers):

The training organized by 100 adult education teachers from 10 provinces was a 24-hour training for 3 days. The training's overall aim is to provide the knowledge and guidance needed by the female trainees, who currently attend recreational courses at the public education centers in 10 provinces determined as pilot provinces and want to be entrepreneurs. The content of the trainer's training, which is based on e-commerce, was delivered by a mixed theoretical and hands-on training method on the knowledge and guidance an entrepreneur may need. The trainer's training was delivered in the topics of theoretical-practical training on Internet use, e-commerce and entrepreneurship, production planning, sales and marketing, entrepreneurship and business planning, time management, financial legislation practices, financial management, marketing, and sales management, and intellectual and property rights. The training was certified by the MoNE General Directorate of Lifelong Learning, and 100 adult education teachers were appointed as entrepreneurship counselors.

A3. Training of female trainees was given to 10,000 women through face-to-face training by 100 adult education teachers who received entrepreneurship training. Entrepreneurship training courses were given to the female trainees who attended the professional and recreational training courses at public education centers as part of the entrepreneurship training program prepared and approved by the Directorate General for Lifelong Learning. The entrepreneurship skills of the female trainees attending the training were formally recognized by a nationally valid course completion certificate given by the public education centers.

The rapid evolution of technology, driven by digital-age innovations, has led to a need for new applications in education. The Women First in Entrepreneurship Mobile App was designed and developed to reach more women in a shorter time by integrating this development and change into the Lifelong Learning system. The Ministry of National Education created the app to provide convenience and opportunity to share in education to teachers and students. The online education platform, abbreviated EBA (Education Computing Network), serves teachers and students across Turkey to support the use of technology as a means to promote learning, not as an end in itself.

Women unable to attend the entrepreneurship courses because of daily household chores and family responsibilities can access the training through the Women First in Entrepreneurship Mobile App, supported by the EBA 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, without any time and place constraints. The mobile app contains a total of 40 training videos, including online usage, communication, social media management, e-commerce, company formation, financial management, and the use of a digital store where they can sell products. These training units enable women to effectively use the digital store and step into work life as entrepreneurs.

A4. Digital store for female entrepreneurs: The www.oncekadin.gov.tr system was established in 2016 to enable women to sell the handicrafts they produced in professional and recreational courses online (Foundation, 2019). In the year the system was established, 10,000 women were provided access, and they uploaded a total of 16,534 products in 14 categories into the system. In 2019, the number of product categories was increased to 15, and the number of products uploaded into the system by the end of the year exceeded 52,000.

A5. Successful female entrepreneurs award: A successful female entrepreneurs awards program is organized at the end of each year to support successful female entrepreneurs who participated in the project and make them role models to inspire other women. In the first year, three women were recognized with an award as successful female entrepreneur of the year. The project, which supports more women every year for them to realize their dreams, increased the number of awards to six by increasing the awards category for successful entrepreneurs in 2019. The successful female entrepreneurs awards are given based on numerical data such as the number of ads uploaded into the digital store, the number of product sales, and the revenue generated from product sales. This includes the Grand Prize for three most successful women, the Special Jury Prize for two women, and the Innovation in Products Award for one woman who designed innovative products. The total amount of seed money provided to women to

facilitate their own business or to grow their business and reach larger audiences totaled 120,000 TL by 2019.

Project outputs:

- The 24-hour entrepreneurship training module;
- 40 instructional videos to improve entrepreneurship skills, including developing digital-based capabilities such as social media, mobile apps, and more;
- A digital store at www.oncekadin.gov.tr created for women who receive training to upload and sell their handicrafts;
- Digital store mobile app;
- The annual most successful female entrepreneurs' competition (Foundation, 2019).

Impacts of the Women First in Entrepreneurship Project

The Women First in Entrepreneurship Project has a versatile structure that positively impacts women's lives. The project has gained ground in a short time on the road set out to support powerful women who build their own business and even offer employment opportunities, contributing to the household and the country's economic growth by developing women's entrepreneurial skills. It has quickly entered the lives of many women living different lifestyles in different socio-economic structures from all over Turkey, providing a magical touch to their lives, including the socio-economic domain. It has enabled women to believe in themselves and realize their potential, increasing their self-confidence and make them feel more useful with their contribution to the family budget.

On the road, committed to the principle, "We combine handicrafts with information technologies and always support women's power, both economically and socially," the project has gained significant ground in women's empowerment through Lifelong Learning. The project, which began in 2015, has spread across Turkey in as little as five years. In a short time, 16,534 products were advertised, resulting in a 105,000 TL return on the sale of 1,500 products. At the end of 2019, over 1,000,000 TL were earned from sales in 15 categories, reaching 54,000 women across Turkey.

In 2019, 621 applications were submitted to the Women First in Entrepreneurship Competition from all around Turkey, and the highest number of applications made to the competition was achieved during the project. Evaluations selected participants who came into the competition based on numerical

data such as the number of sales made through the virtual store, the number of products uploaded to the system, and the amount of income generated from the sale of these products. Three entrepreneur women who came in at the end of the evaluation received a Grand Prize, two women received a Special Jury Award, and one woman received the Innovation in Products Award. Six awardees were given seed capital of 43,500 TL to grow their business and reach larger audiences. The seed money provided to female entrepreneurs at the annual entrepreneurship competition was 120,000 TL by the end of 2019.

The Women First in Entrepreneurship Project received great interest and reactions all over Turkey for its contribution to the economy of both household and country by empowering women through Lifelong Learning. It has also taken its place in the international arena and has been included in the *United Nations' Report on Best Practices for the Future of Business and Human Rights* (Compact, 2019).

The *United Nations' Report on Best Practices for the Future of Business and Human Rights* provides a global assessment of effective solutions for the future of business and the business world across the globe, addressing labor and fighting poverty, fighting climate change, immigration and immigrant themes. In addition to this global assessment, it also showcases the good practices of countries addressing the designated themes, and sets the selected good practices as examples to other countries by acting as a catalyst.

The feedback received at the end of each year from the female entrepreneurs who participated in project activities revealed that their self-confidence had been restored and that they have overcome barriers to their success. In addition, they also stated that it was all about believing in and trusting yourself that they had achieved this through the project, and were able to see what they could achieve with the Women First in Entrepreneurship Project, which also had a positive impact on their personal and cognitive development. Furthermore, they said that the most effective and enjoyable aspect of the project was developing their digital skills and seeing how they could reach a larger audience through social media accounts. The participating female entrepreneurs emphasized a different aspect of their achievement of becoming a contributor to the family budget by using up-to-date technology and producing and selling, highlighting the importance of keeping their skills up to date to grow their business with the awareness of being productive.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The documents examined in the present study discuss the importance of Lifelong Learning to ensure sustainable development, but lifelong participation in Turkey appears to be below the European average, and the rate of involvement is improv-

ing slowly. On the other hand, the reviewed top policy documents contain educational policies that support women's participation in non-formal education and employment processes for countries to achieve a sound socio-economic structure and appear to be supporting each other. However, despite all the policy measures and recommendations, it seems that the practices are inadequate, and that plans have not met their goals. This leads to the following conclusions.

Adults must be made more aware that Lifelong Learning is not only a leisure time activity but an opportunity to develop skills, actions taken must be based on the perspective that strengthening society will bring economic recovery, and the perspective of Lifelong Learning must be adopted and supported by educational systems. Lifelong Learning covers all individuals who make up society, and sustainable economies can only be achieved if all parties participate actively in the growth process. Therefore, cooperation between the parties that drive society, such as policymakers, universities, non-governmental organizations, workers and employers' unions, can help disseminate the Lifelong Learning approach throughout society. Creating a Lifetime Learning culture and keeping individuals' attitudes, knowledge, and skills up to date can be said to produce socio-economic growth in the country.

Entrepreneurship is one of the most important areas that allow women to participate as key actors in economic growth and increase global employment. Therefore, it must be made easier for women who have human resources potential to use economic growth to access knowledge. Their digital capabilities must be improved to make it easier for them to access knowledge and adapt to the changing digital world.

Women, who make up half of the total population of Turkey and the whole world, must be taught how to access knowledge in today's information age, and mechanisms of facilitating such access must be included in the lifelong learning system. The rapid development of technology and countries' demographic profile makes it difficult for a country's population to adapt to social and business life. Therefore, individuals need to continually update their skills to speed up the adaptation process, build a more solid social structure, and achieve economic power. These updates are delivered to all individuals who make up society and incorporated into the development process by integrating the Lifelong Learning approach into the education systems.

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Sadife Çinkir²

Ministarstvo za nacionalno obrazovanje, Turska

Održivi razvoj kroz celoživotno učenje: dobra praksa ženskog preduzetništva u Turskoj

Apstrakt: Žene čine polovinu svetske populacije, ali se to ne može reći za njihovo aktivno učešće u procesu ekonomskog razvoja. Održiva i jaka privreda može da se ostvari podjednako aktivnim učešćem, razvijanjem ili osvežavanjem veština svih pojedinaca koji čine društvo. Ovaj rad se fokusira na doprinos održivom razvoju žena preduzetnica kroz celoživotno učenje. Rad obuhvata dva dela. Prvi deo razmatra povezanost između dostupnosti digitalnog obrazovanja prilagođenog uzrastu i održivog razvoja u celoživotnom učenju. Drugi deo je primer dobre prakse koji ispituje uticaj projekta *Žene na prvom mestu u preduzetništvu* na razvoj ženskog preduzetništva. On izlaže razloge iza sprovođenja projekta, proces njegove realizacije, rezultate i uticaj. Kako bi se pospešilo učešće žena na tržištu rada u sklopu održivog razvoja današnje privrede, projekat pokrenut u 10 pokrajina trenutno se sprovodi širom Turske. Projekat se sprovodi pod koordinacijom turskog Generalnog direktorata za celoživotno učenje od 2015. godine. Generalni direktorat za celoživotno učenje je najviši autoritet za donošenje politika u Turskoj u pogledu jačanje sistema obrazovanja odraslih.

Ključne reči: žensko preduzetništvo, celoživotno učenje, održivi razvoj, pristup digitalnom obrazovanju.

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