

AN ANALYSIS OF ACADEMIC AND SOCIO CULTUREL OPINION OF THE FOREIGN STUDENTS WHO CAME TO TURKEY VIA ERASMUS EXCHANGE PROGRAMME: THE EXAMPLE OF SELCUK UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

Erasmus Programme is a student exchange programme which finances by EU. This programme is enable students to study one or two semester or intern some period in different country. The aim of this programme providing new abilites, different experience, meet new cultures and etc. Selcuk University has participate to this programme since 2005. From 2005 Selcuk University accepted many foreing student from EU countries each semester.

The aim of this study is to identify the academic and socio-cultural opinion of students who came from various countries of the Europe to Turkey via Erasmus exchange programme. The study group consist of 55 foreign students who come to Selcuk University between 2014-2016 year. To understand opinion of the students survey was applied. SPSS software programme was used to analysed the data. The results of the study show that students had positive opinion during their study and they retured back with different experience even they had to encounter some academic problems such us courses, language etc.

Keywords: Erasmus, Exchange Programme, Foreign Students, EU

INTRODUCTION

Turkish universities are becoming an increasingly popular destination for students from whole world. Because of Turkey is the safest and most stable countries for students, when compared other countries in the region.

“Selcuk University is the oldest universites which is located in Konya/Turkey. Konya is an old byzantian and roman city. Konya is full of interesting heritage, which comes from early Turkish and Islam culture. The most interesting point on the map in Konya is Mevlana museum, In that times, building was a home for Mevlana-Rumi, person who has created Whirling derwishes group. Charm of the city was described in the Bible In the central plateau of the Lycaonian District, Iconium was a city set amidst a very large fertile plain that stretched to the north and east” (Selcuk University, 2015).

Selcuk University, which began education in 1975. Now it has 67800 students, 2507 academic staff. With a population of more than 75 thousand people, including academic and administrative staff and students. Each year 38 115 bachelor degree students 9 519 master degree students and 26 178 two years programme students are educated by Selcuk University. Total number is 73 812 (Selcuk University, 2015).

Today, having 23 faculties, 5 graduate shoools, 6 schools, 22 vocational schools, 1 state conservatory its is one of the Turkey’s largest university.

Since 2004, Selcuk University is a part of Erasmus Exchange Programme. Students and academic/administrative staff can benefit from this programme during the academic year. University has over 500 agreement with 27 European Union countries such us Spain, Portogual, Polond, Holland, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Romania, Hungary etc. Students come to Selcuk University mostly from Spain, Poland, Romania, Lithuania, and Italy.

In this study academic and socio-cultural opinion of students who came from various countries of the Europe to Turkey via Erasmus exchange programme will be analysed. The study group consist of 55 foreign students who come to Selcuk University between 2014 and 2016 year. To understand opinion of the student’s survey was applied.

Development of Erasmus Programme

EU has different educational programmes which it has put into practice. All these programmes have change during the time and showed sustainability on the way of reaching the expectations from the educational programme (Çankaya, 2015: 886-893). EU aims to enhance cooperation between higher education institutions in all member states, programme countries and finally third countries (Cooparete and Public Strategy Advisory Group, 2009). Mobility of students is the most important European Union educational movement, and also a key elements in the cooperation process towards creating a European Higher Education Area. The basis of the EU educational programme is mobility of students and staff. Since 1987, Eventhough European education policies changed its form, the aim of the programme is still the same.

Programme is opereted by EU commission. EU Commission is responsible for managed the budget and establish the regulation and criteria, coordination of the structures in charge of implementing the Programme at national level (Erasmus + Programme Guide, 2016: 61).

EU has different educational programmes which carry into effect since 1987. COMETT was the first educational programme, which was accepted in 1987. Programme contacts between the industry and the university in EU (Cooparete and Public Strategy Advisory Group, 2009). The other educational programmes implemented since 1995. These are SOCRATES I-II (1995-2006), LIFELONG LEARNING (2007-2013). The achievements of more than 25 years of European programmes built Erasmus + Programme which will implement for the period 2014-2020 (Erasmus Programme Guide, 2015: 4). Erasmus + Programme is in the fields of education, training, youth and sports. All these programmes opened to the benefits of young and adult people almost in all grades of education (Çankaya, 2015: 890). Erasmus Programme has started to exhance with 3244 students in 1987. Now this number has increased more than 230 000 students per year (European Commision, 2016). Furthermore the number of students who take part in Erasmus + programme is expected to increase further. With Erasmus + Programme EU commission aims to make a contribution to help tackle socio-economic changes via education, training, youth and sports (Erasmus + Programme Guide, 2016: 61).

Erasmus Programme has been implemented in European and Programme Countries. Programme aims to increase the level of tertiary education and empower the European dimension, improve higher education in whole Europe and other third counrties. Programme is both supports exchanges of students and staff in higher education. Programme tries to develop theirs skills. Especially students are find opportunity to improve their foreign language skills. Beneficiary can share own experience and obtain new knowledge in this process. Both home and host countries can work together to develop their educational systems and encouraging internl cooperation (Erasmus + Programme Guide, 2016). Thanks to Erasmus Programme, higher education institutions can cooperate each other, expand their relations and enable internalization of education. Programme promotes a culture of tolerance and understanding.

Erasmus is not only mobility of students but also teaching and research activities. Within the theaching and training staff mobility enable staff to relase other institutions system and help to create intarnational contact between universities (European Commission, 2008: 7). Better relations with partner university can contrubite to make easy mobility of students.

Education Process of Incoming Students within the “Erasmus Programme

Before mobility of students started, Erasmus coordination office of home university inform to host university about the details of students. Host university contact directly with the students, give necessary information and send the official documents such as Aplication Form and Learning Agreement. After filled Application Form by students, Host university send acceptance letter which include period of study of students.

After students received the acceptance letters, they have to prepare and send the Learning agreement contact with departmental coordinator of home and host university. Students has to take minimum 30 ECTS credits for each semester. All courses should be written on Learning Agreement. It helps recognition of student’s studies after they return. After students arrive to Selcuk University, orientation week organize by Erasmus office. The aim of the orientation week to make easy adaptation of student in new environment. Giving necessary information about host universty is also important point of this meeting. Students inform about campus life, city and recidence permit. Erasmus coordination office generally organize city tour, wellcome dinner and various event. Erasmus cordination office help student’s problems during their stay. If needed in Learning Agreement, students can add or delete their courses. Before student leave, Erasmus coordinaton office of host university provide certificate of attendence and transcript of records.

METHOD

Surveys were made with the use of questionnaires among 55 students who came to Selcuk University within Erasmus exchange programme between 2014 and 2016 year. %52, 7 (29) of all students were male, 47, 3 (26) of all students were female. Students came from Spain, Poland, Romania, Lithuania, Germany, and Italy.

A questionnaire was implemented to evaluate satisfaction of the incoming students who came from different countries to Selcuk University framework of the Erasmus + Programme. 25 students were from the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, 17 students were from the Faculty of Engineering, 5 students were from Faculty of Letter, 8 students were from Faculty of Agriculture. Scale was formed as Not at all (1), Bad (2), Good (3), Very Good (4), Excellent (5).

One question is grading scale from 1 to 3 which evaluates level of satisfaction of their Erasmus stay in Selcuk University. Scale was formed as a quite pleased (1), pleased (2) and not pleased (3).

One question is grading scale from 1 to 3 which evaluates to student's opinion, if they would like to come again or not.

FINDINGS

As you see in the first figure there is tried to evaluate student's satisfaction level at Selcuk University. The questions are about academic quality of education, courses, competencies and expertise of the teachers, variety of courses, course contents, improving your knowledge and skills, turkish language course (content, methodology), and erasmus staff.

The findings belonging to the questions as follow, only % 7, 3 (4 students) of all students opinion are negative, and % 92, 8 (51 students) of all students opinion are positive. Most of the students are not satisfied with academic quality of education.

Language can be a quite important problem for students who are study in abroad. Same department of students participate in courses that they are not able to understand (Lipowski, 2012: 1). Because of courses don't teach English by teachers.

The finding regarding questions of courses thought English is not too bad. Because only %20 (11 students) all students opinion are negative. %80 (44 students) of all students stated that they had no any trouble about courses thought English. And %20 (11 students) of all students don't see enough variety of courses. And the rest %80 (44 students) of all see enough.

As we mention before aims of the Erasmus + programmes improve knowledge and skills, provide new abilities, different experience and meet new cultures. Finding regarding this issue is showed that %89, 1(49 students) of all students opinions served this aim. %89, 1 (49 students) of all student thought that they improved their knowledge and skills while took part in Erasmus + Programme at Selcuk University.

Erasmus + programme enables people to meet new culture. One of the main cultural item is language. Erasmus students who come to study at Selcuk University can find opportunity to join free Turkish language course. Students opinion about Turkish class is differ. While %21, 8 (12 students) of all students are not satisfied, %78, 2 (43 students) of all students are satisfied.

Erasmus coordination office provides a link between students and department coordinator. Also Erasmus Office contact with the home institution to successfully complete the process of the mobility. The opinions of student's regarding the satisfaction about the Erasmus staff before, during and after the mobility are positive. No one students have negative idea. %100 (55 students) of all students are satisfied.

As we understood from the Figure one, the lowest score was received about courses. One of the reason could be that the teacher are not able to give lecturer as an English language. Some departments have only Turkish class and students has to take project in order to pass the classes. The variety of courses didn't appear very high in relation to other statements. %20 (11 students) of all students thought it was not satisfaction factor for them.

Figure 1-How satisfied were you with the followings at Selcuk University?

| | Not at all | Bad | Good | Very Good | Excellent |
|--|------------|------|-------|-----------|-----------|
| Academic quality of education | - | 7,3 | 40,00 | 25,5 | 27,3 |
| Courses taught English | 10,9 | 10,9 | 38,2 | 38,2 | 18,2 |
| Variety of courses | 12,7 | 7,3 | 36,4 | 27,3 | 16,4 |
| Improving your knowledge and skills | - | 10,9 | 23,6 | 36,4 | 29,1 |
| Turkish language course (content, methodology) | 10,9 | 10,9 | 20,0 | 34,5 | 23,6 |
| Erasmus staff | - | - | 10,9 | 40,0 | 49,1 |

At the Figure 2 we tried to understand student's motivating reasons for participating Erasmus mobility at Selcuk University. Some factors such as cultural experience, practice of foreign language, living abroad, wonder about Turkey, meeting new people and career plans are assessed by students. We understood from the result to gain cultural experience positively motivating students to come Selcuk University Turkey has own traditional culture competing with the western countries. Therefore students generally prefer to Turkey in order to meet new culture and experience. %100 (55 students) of all students choose Turkey to gain cultural experience.

Living abroad and gaining cultural experience, practice of foreign language, wondering about Turkey meeting new people are those factors that motivate students to choose Turkey as a destination. Career plans didn't appear very high when it compared with other factors. %7, 3 (4 students) of all students didn't think that Erasmus in Turkey don't contribute to their career development. Nonetheless %92, 7 (51 students) of all students thought it was an important motivation factor for them.

Figure 2- Please rank the factors which motivated you to participation Erasmus at Selcuk University?

| | Not at all | Bad | Good | Very Good | Excellent |
|------------------------------|------------|-----|------|-----------|-----------|
| Cultural experience | - | - | 12,7 | 38,2 | 49,1 |
| Practice of foreign language | - | 1,8 | 25,5 | 36,4 | 36,4 |
| Living abroad | - | - | 21,8 | 34,5 | 43,6 |
| Wonder about Turkey | - | - | 10,9 | 29,1 | 60 |
| Meeting new people | - | - | 27,3 | 27,3 | 45,5 |
| Career Plans | - | 7,3 | 38,2 | 21,8 | 32,7 |

Questionnaire of Figure 3 tried to evaluate student's opinion after mobility. Opinion of the %14, 6 (8 students) of all students are negative about Turkey. %85 (47 students) of all students thought that Turkey was much better than they were expecting. All students agreed that Erasmus experience at Selcuk University contributed to their personal development. %7, 3 of all students think that Erasmus don't contribute to their career development. And quite number of students accept that contribution of Erasmus programme to their career development.

Figure 3-After I experienced Erasmus in Turkey:

| | Not at all | Bad | Good | Very Good | Excellent |
|--|------------|-----|------|-----------|-----------|
| Turkey was much better than I was expecting | 5,5 | 9,1 | 14,5 | 12,7 | 58,2 |
| Erasmus contributed to my personal development | - | - | 27,3 | 27,3 | 45,5 |
| Erasmus contribute to my career development | 5,5 | 1,8 | 34,5 | 23,6 | 34,5 |

Figure 4 aims to analyse level of satisfaction about offering facilities. Selcuk University has one of the first Erasmus house in Turkey. Erasmus house provides accommodation to incoming students and staff for an affordable price. It is located in the campus. Erasmus incoming students are quite pleased to stay all together in this house. %78, 2(43 students) of all students are satisfied from this facilities. %21, 8 (12 students) of them don't satisfied from Erasmus house during their stay in Konya. One of the main reason that make students unsatisfied is internet connection. Students mostly mentioned about this problem during their stay.

General idea of students about library is positive. Only %12, 7 (7 students) of all students don't satisfied from this facilities.

Konya is one of the most conservative, religious city in Turkey. Before come, most of students know this feature. Student's life, social and cultural activities don't look like western university's life. The first impression after arriving to Konya was often negative. But it was changing during their study in Turkey. On the one hand some of student's didn't keep up with this life after they come, On the other hand most of people accept this feature as a cultural structure and they had various memories after they returned. Erasmus student network which is mostly consist of outgoing Erasmus students organise a trip and some event to offer good time for them. Generally students didn't have any problems with adaptation to living in Konya/Turkey. Only %12, 8 (7 students) of all students stated that they don't satisfied.

Turkey is the safest and most stable country for students, when compared other countries in the region. As we understood from the result, students opinion about Turkey are support this idea. %96, 4 (53 students) of all students thought that Turkey as a safe country. Most of student have been many touristic places all around Turkey and some Middle East countries such as Kuwait and Israel by hitchhiking. Hitchhiking is one of the cheapest way of travelling for them. In addition most of students stated that it's safest way for travelling in Turkey and around.

All students have opportunity to eat student's cafeteria. Cafeteria provides students both lunch and dinner. IT cost 2 TL (~50 cent). Students get fun with cheapest and traditional meal at cafeteria. It can seen from the result. All students are satisfied from restaurants.

Almost all students are satisfied with computer service and medical service. Selcuk University has hospita near the Erasmus house l in the campus. Students has opportunity to get easily hospital when they need it.

The student's opinion about internet service can easily see from the result. %29, 1(16 student) of all students are not satisfied.

Figure 4-Level of satisfaction about facilities at Selcuk University

| | Not at all | Bad | Good | Very Good | Excellent |
|--------------------------------|------------|------|------|-----------|-----------|
| Erasmus House | - | 21,8 | 36,4 | 16,4 | 25,5 |
| Library | - | 12,7 | 36,4 | 34,5 | 16,4 |
| Social and Cultural Activities | 5,5 | 7,3 | 43,6 | 20,0 | 23,6 |
| Security | - | 3,6 | 30,9 | 21,8 | 43,6 |
| Restourants | - | - | 25,5 | 43,6 | 30,9 |
| Computer Center | - | 1,8 | 47,3 | 30,9 | 20,0 |
| Medical Services | - | - | 41,8 | 32,7 | 25,5 |
| Internet Services | 1,8 | 27,3 | 43,6 | 16,4 | 10,9 |

Figure 5 showed that how much assistance/support students received from their personel and academic environment. As we understood, Turkish friends, Erasmus friends, friends outside, teacher and Erasmus staff support students. From the questions, we found out, that our students are very well informed from their enviroment in every aspect. Students didn't encounter any problem in adaptation of education system and culture. They contacted easily with their coordinator and theacher. Only %12, 7 (7 students) of all students stated that department coordinator don't support them.

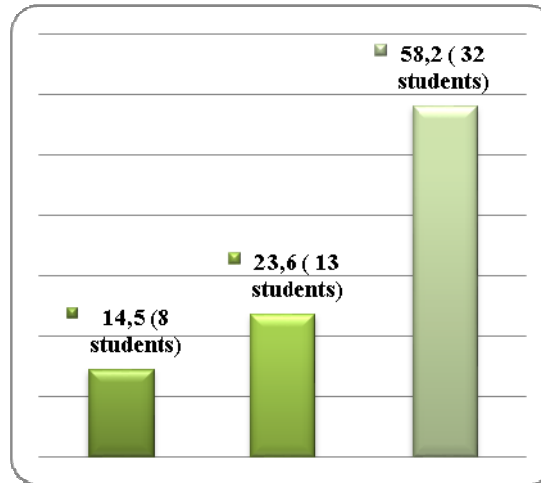
Especially Turkish students who took part in Erasmus exchange programme were help to make them easy in adaptation to Konya. They try to help them any problem that they encounter during their stay in Konya.

Figure 5-How much assistance/support you received from your personel and academic environment?

| | Not at all | Bad | Good | Very Good | Excellent |
|---------------------------|------------|------|------|-----------|-----------|
| Turkish friends at Selcuk | - | - | 14,5 | 43,6 | 41,8 |
| Erasmus friends | - | - | 27,3 | 25,5 | 47,3 |
| Friends outside | - | - | 16,7 | 50,0 | 33,3 |
| Teachers | - | - | - | 40,0 | 67,3 |
| My department coordinator | - | 12,7 | 10,9 | 41,8 | 34,5 |
| Erasmus Staff | - | - | 7,3 | 41,8 | 51 |

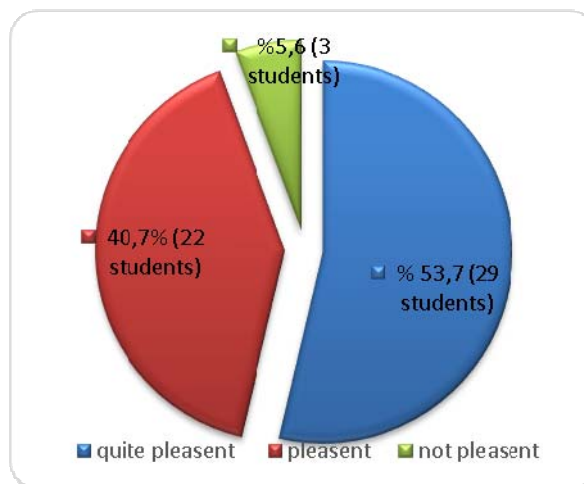
At the Figure 6, we wanted students to compare academic quality of home and host institutions %14, 5(8 students) of all Erasmus students believed that their academic quality was better at their home university. %23, 6 (13 students) of all Erasmus students stated that academic quality was better at the host university. A significant proportion of students %58, 2 (32 students) thought that academic quality was equivalent, When compared with host and home university.

Figure 6-When comparing the education system between the home university and the host university, how did you find the latter?



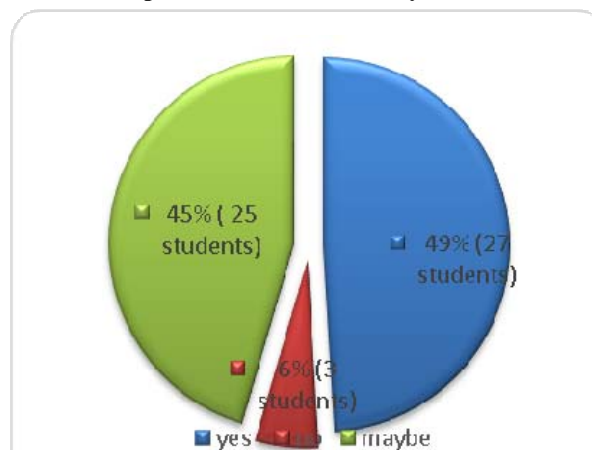
We asked to students that what extent they pleased to study at Selcuk University. %53,7 (29 students) of all students stated that they were quite pleased. Only 3 students didn't pleased during their study at Selcuk University

Figure 7- In General, What Extent Are you pleased to study at Selcuk University?



Finally we asked students "If you had the chance to decide again about my Erasmus place, I would have prefer to study at Selcuk University". Most of the students wants to come back as a Erasmus students. Also many students would like to recommend to the other friends to participation Erasmus at Selcuk.

Figure 8- If I had the chance to decide again the others to about my Erasmus place, I would have prefer Selcuk University?



CONCLUSIONS

Students study of various educational programme. Erasmus Programme is one of those programme which enables students to gain new experiences. Movement of students via Erasmus programme is long history. Students have started to move for study since 1987s. Until these times, even if Erasmus educational programmes changed its form, the basis of the programme didn't change. Nowadays increasing number of students use this opportunity during and after their study.

This article aimed to analyse motivation of Erasmus students, who came to study one or two semester at Selcuk University. It also give us information, why students choose to study at Selcuk University. Motivation factors of the students are changeable. The most main reasons for choosing Selcuk University were to live abroad, wonder about Turkey and cultural experience. Other factors are also obtained high rating.

In general we understood from the findings incoming Erasmus students have positive impact about Selcuk University. Eventhough, students don't encounter any trouble during their stay, some factors especially courses are effect negatively their opinion about Selcuk University. Therefore to come up with this problem, courses thought English should be flexible and variety of courses should be increased by teachers.

Students were most satisfied with the student cafeteria and medical services. Least satisfying factors were courses, social and cultural activities and internet services at the dormitory. Erasmus coordination office and teachers should cooperate together and organise an event for students. In addition Turkish students can get involved personally with the students to increase motivation. To solve internet problem in Erasmus House, Officers should reinform and press to authorities until make a progress.

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