

INTERNATIONALIZATION AS AN INEVITABLE SOCIAL CHANGE: AN OVERVIEW OF HIGHER EDUCATION CASE OF TURKEY

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ABSTRACT

Global competition for accepting international students for higher education has peaked recently. The developed and developing countries are competing to get the most of the share and Turkey is no exception in this regard. Millions of students have their higher education in foreign countries out of their countries' and home cultures' borders as a result of unstoppable globalization. It can be understood that the reasons behind this phenomenon varies from profit-making to language and culture spreading for the welcoming countries. Students, also, take into economic considerations since it has more opportunities such as cultural experience, job finding advantages, and it has scholarship possibilities which make studying abroad a very convenient and most of the time free experience. In this study, an overview of the reasons why countries welcome international students and why students choose to study abroad are reviewed. Turkey's higher education internationalization policy is investigated, and possible solutions are advised through a careful literature review.

Key words: internationalization, globalization, international students, student exchange programs.

GLOBAL COMPETITION FOR RECRUITING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

As national economies become more interconnected and educational participation rises, higher education comes on stage as a means to further students' levels and help them to improve their understanding of the world's cultures, languages, and business methods. Tertiary education is becoming more international through a number of means, including distance education, international education-related internships and training experiences, cross-border delivery of academic programs, and offshore satellite campuses (OECD, 2016). "Among the phenomena related to the internationalization of tertiary education, enrolling in a study program abroad is receiving considerable attention from students and policy makers. By providing an opportunity to expand knowledge of other societies and languages, studying abroad is an important cultural and personal experience for students, as well as a way to improve their employability in the globalized sectors of the labor market" (OECD, 2016). These activities range from traditional study-abroad programs, allowing students to learn about other cultures, to providing access to higher education in countries where local institutions cannot meet the demand. Other activities stress upgrading the international perspectives and skills of students, enhancing foreign language programs, and providing cross-cultural understanding. (Altbach & Knight, 2007)

Global competition for the recruitment of international students is increasing as international education has become a major export industry at the university level, generating foreign exchange and economic benefits for universities and receiving destinations (Marginson, 2010). In this regard, student mobility has increased dramatically over the recent past, due to a number of factors. The exploding demand for tertiary education worldwide and the perceived value of studying at prestigious post-secondary institutions abroad contribute to an increasing and diversified flow of international students, ranging from those who cannot find a place to study in post-secondary education at home to students of high academic achievement studying at high-quality programs and institutions. In addition, the educational value associated with a diverse student body, the substantial revenues that can be earned by expanding education for international students, along with other economic and political considerations prompted some governments and institutions to make major efforts to attract students from outside their national borders (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Knight, 2008)

TURKEY'S PLACE IN THE COMPETITION

“Between 2000 and 2011, the number of international students has more than doubled. Today, almost 4.5 million tertiary students are enrolled outside their country of citizenship. The largest numbers of international students are from China, India and Korea. Asian students account for 53% of all students studying abroad worldwide. New players have emerged on the international education market in the past decades, such as Australia, New Zealand, Spain, the Russian Federation and, more recently, South Korea. By contrast, the share of international students in some of the most attractive countries – Germany and the United States, for instance – has declined. As countries increasingly benefit from student mobility, the competition to attract and retain students has diversified the map of destinations over the past decade” (OECD, 2013). Turkey is one of the attractive destinations for the international students in tertiary level who are seeking an abroad study experience. According to the statistics published by Turkey’s Council of Higher Education (2017), the total number of foreign students is 108.076, and the number of foreign students registered in 2016 is 25.827. It can be understood from the data that Turkey attracted nearly one- fourth of its sojourner students in only one year, and it is a rapid growth. The ten biggest student exporter countries and number of their students in Turkey are Syria (15.042), Azerbaijan (14.878), Turkmenistan (10.418), Iran (6099) Afghanistan (5251), Iraq (5012), Germany (3755), Greece (2285), Kyrgyzstan (2032), Bulgaria (2030) (Turkey's Council of Higher Education, 2017). As can be understood from the data, Turkey attracts most of the foreign students from Turkic or surrounding countries. It can be inferred here that foreign students tend to select the host country that has a similar culture with their own countries. It is very surprising to see Germany on the top ten list because it has a totally different religious, cultural and geographical background with Turkey. However, the situation can be explained that most of the students coming from Germany have Turkish origins who had migrated to Germany with laboring purposes (Inter- university Council of Republic of Turkey, 2016, p. 23). Indeed, this does not change the fact that Turkey accepts and is going to accept more and more sojourner students and be an attractive place in the years coming for the ones who seek a borderless education.

MOTIVES OF INTERNATIONALIZATION OF TERTIARY EDUCATION

According to Knight (2008, p. 2), the term ‘internationalization’ and the definition of it is not new, it has widely been used in political science and governmental relations, but its popularity in the education sector has really soared only since the early 1980s. Prior to this time, “international education” and “international cooperation” were favored terms—and still are in some countries. In the 1990s, the discussion centered on differentiating “international education” from such overlapping terms as “comparative education,” “global education,” and “multi-cultural education.”

As globalization advances, internationalization is becoming an important initiative for many universities around the world. Internationalization is changing the world of higher education, and globalization is changing the world of internationalization. Key drivers for this transformation are the development of advanced communication and technological services, the dominance of the knowledge society, increased international labor mobility, more emphasis on the market economy and the trade liberalization, increased levels of private investment and decreased public support for education, and lifelong learning (Knight, 2008). Internationalization is often confused with globalization. We define globalization as the economic, political, and societal forces pushing 21st century higher education toward greater international involvement (Altbach & Knight, 2007). The results of globalization include the integration of research, the use of English as the lingua franca for scientific communication, the growing international labor market for scholars and scientists, the growth of communications firms and of multinational and technology publishing, and the use of information technology (IT). IT facilitates communication; permits efficient storage, selection, and dissemination of knowledge; and allows providers to offer academic programs through e-learning (Altbach & Knight, 2007).

In his article, Kubota summarized the main motives as “internationalizing higher education in the past decade has been influenced considerably by a global trend toward expanding trade in services and increasing international competition for human resources in a knowledge economy (Kubota, 2009, p. 613). The importance of internationalization is indeed increasingly discussed in economic terms. Student mobility and language learning are caught in this trend. For instance, in advocating for increasing the number of international students in

the United States, the Association of International Educators (NAFSA) discussed the economic benefits that tuition fees and living expenses paid by international students bring to the U.S. economy—approximately \$15.54 billion during the 2007–2008 academic year.” It can be easily understood here that the main motive behind internationalization of higher education is an inevitable globalization which every country must adapt or else they will fall behind the world agenda. The second motive is, of course, profit making via tuition fees and other side spending inside the host country.

Altbach & Knight (2007) summarized the motives of international education as follows:

- *Profits*: Earning money is a key motive for all internationalization projects in the for-profit sector and for some traditional nonprofit universities with financial problems
- *Access Provision and Demand Absorption*: The proportion of young people demanding and obtaining access worldwide expanded dramatically with the advent of mass higher education. Demand is rapidly increasing, even in countries still enrolling less than 20% of the age group, such as India, China, and much of Africa. Many international higher education services— focused on profits—provide access to students in countries lacking the domestic capacity to meet the demand. Access can take many forms: branch campuses, franchised foreign academic programs or degrees, or independent institutions based on foreign academic models.
- *Traditional Internationalization*: Many universities have participated in international activities for decades, some for a century or more. Prestigious, selective U.S. colleges use international programs to provide international and cross-cultural perspectives for their students and to enhance their curricula.
- *European Internationalization*: EU authorities actively pursued academic internationalization for more than two decades, as part of the move to economic and political integration. At first, the EU promoted and lavishly funded programs such as ERASMUS that provided large numbers of EU university students with academic experiences outside their home country. The scope of European regional integration expanded, and now the Bologna process harmonizes entire academic systems to ensure compatible degree structures, transferable credits, and equal academic qualifications throughout the EU. European internationalization mainly focuses on the countries of the EU—students are still encouraged to study abroad within the EU— though several non-EU member states have joined the Bologna process.
- *Developing-Country Internationalization*: Developing countries host a significant number of international students. Developing countries seek to attract foreign students to their universities to improve the quality and cultural composition of the student body, gain prestige, and earn income.
- *Individual Internationalization*: Individuals make many key decisions concerning destinations and fields of study. Students, though constrained by immigration regulations, decide whether they will return home following their academic work or stay at home and enroll in the programs offered by foreign education providers. Most of the world’s more than 2 million international students are self-funded, that is, they and their families pay for their own academic work. Students are therefore the largest source of funds for international education—not governments, academic institutions, or philanthropies.

TURKEY’S ROADMAP AND INTENTIONS IN ACCEPTING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

International student in Turkey, in the Foreign Student Strategy Document prepared in 2012 under the coordination of YTB (Department of Foreign Turks and Relative Communities) and accepted by the International Student Evaluation Board, is described as “A student who is not a citizen of the Republic of Turkey and who is studying on his own account or as a scholarship student for social, cultural and professional development in an educational institution of any grade and branch in Turkey with student visas or special permits.” (Inter-university Council of Republic of Turkey, 2016)

Due to its academic, social, cultural, political and economic contributions, international students have been on the agenda of many countries today. In these countries, academic studies are carried out to support the growing international student market, national strategies and policy texts are being prepared and institutional structures are being established, and Turkey is no exception in this regard. Many institutions and organizations in Turkey are working on the internationalization of higher education. The Department of Higher Education of the Ministry of National Education and the General Directorate of Overseas Education, Department of Foreign Turks and Relative Communities (YTB), Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA), Foreign Economic

Relations Board (DEIK), Ministry of National Education, Yunus Emre Cultural Centers, Foreign Ministry Promotion and Cultural Affairs Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and General Directorate of Immigration Administration of the Ministry of Interior have undertaken different responsibilities in the fields of internationalization of higher education. Comprehensive reports were prepared, workshops and conferences were organized on this framework (Inter-university Council of Republic of Turkey, 2016).

In a report published by Republic of Turkey Ministry of Development (2015), it is stated as follows: “International students become an important means of production and development by staying in the countries they are after their training or return to their countries and as a cultural ambassador they are obliged to bridge the political, social, cultural and commercial areas between the countries and the countries they are visiting. Contribution to the elimination of labor shortages, especially in the countries with declining population and increasingly aging, is the indirect economic gains of internationalization of higher education, with the development of the education sector, the opening of new employment areas and the return of trainees to the countries and the emergence of new markets and commercial partnerships in the long run.”

The main motives of Republic of Turkey can easily be noticed by reading the lines above. The very first intention of Turkey is to gain profit via tuition fees and in-economy spending of the sojourner students. Second one is to gain the sympathies of the students they host for years and to make them spread these good emotions by being the cultural ambassadors. Knowing Turkish in intermediate level is a prerequisite to study a Turkish-mediated-program in any Turkish university, just like other countries enforce their language to be learned, and Turkey makes it obligatory to prove that the students already know Turkish or it makes the students enroll in Turkish classes opened within the university they study. Bearing this in mind, it can be deduced that Turkey, like all other countries, tries to spread its official language, and by this way its culture, opinions, way of thinking, and lifestyle.

The general tendencies of the world higher education system which have been expressed in the workshop held on 9-10 April 2016 in Ardahan University are listed in the following items.

- The countries that the international students prefer the most are the ones having the universities teaching in English.
- The biggest student exporters are Asian countries.
- International students concentrate mostly on Master and PhD. programs.
- Some countries have become international centers of attraction in certain areas of science (Inter-university Council of Republic of Turkey, 2016).

Holding workshops and conferences, doing research, and encouraging scholars and governmental bodies to publish reports and scientific papers to spot the trends, changes and difficulties in internationalization of universities around the globe shows us that Turkey is ambitious to take its part in the global market. The most extensive report of a research project done by Republic of Turkey Ministry of Development (2015) gives useful and realistic advices to policy makers, administrators, and scholars about the critical points in Turkish higher education to be improved. The highlighted 7 points and sub points are as follows:

1. *Ensuring effective governance in internationalization:* a national strategy for international students is needed, establishment of a superstructure responsible for internationalization should be assessed, internationalization action plan needs to be prepared, raising awareness of internationalization should be ensured, data and statistics should be produced to increase effectiveness in the decision-making process, establishment of a monitoring and evaluation system for projects and programs to be implemented in the event of globalization should be assessed.
2. *Promotion and Branding Activities:* the Turkish brand needs to be established in the international higher education market, an introduction strategy should be prepared to increase the awareness of the Turkish university system, it is necessary to prepare new materials in the direction of branding activities, in order to watch the promotional materials, study in Turkey portal should be developed to promote, social media needs to be used effectively in the creation and promotion of the Turkish higher education brand, it should be assessed that foreign

representations and consultants operate in international student attraction and promotion, private sector organizations need to be encouraged and encouraged in the context of internationalization, improvements have to be made regarding incentives for foreign currency earning service provided by the public.

3. *Preparing the Higher Education System for Internationalization:* in the context of internationalization, universities need to oversee their strategic plans and prepare action plans, universities should be supported technically in internationalization, training programs need to be diversified to increase the attractiveness of universities, the number of international cooperation and exchange programs in higher education should be increased and improved, a flexible, feasible system of accreditation and equivalence needs to be established, necessary measures should be taken in order for international academicians to be employed more in Turkey, expansion of accommodation opportunities for international students is required, physical conditions and social facilities in the campus and in the country should be improved, alternative solutions should be produced in respect of marriage, the administrative and physical capacities of international student offices need to be upgraded to an official status, periodical experience sharing meetings should be held between student offices, orientation programs for international students should be organized, problems and expectations of international students should be determined, it is necessary to make the activities for the graduates systematic and systematic, the financial support of internationalization activities will contribute to the international student withdrawal of universities, higher awareness of universities to be more flexible in pricing must be evaluated
4. *Review of Student Application, Selection and Admission Processes:* establishment of a common system / portal for the application and acceptance of pupils should be assessed, objectivity, transparency, accessibility and awareness in student selection should be high, flexible, feasible, and just systematic, a flexible implementation of the student admission period should be established.
5. *Legislation and Review of Bureaucratic Transactions:* measures should be taken to minimize the bureaucracy in the procedures that international students should follow, procedures for follow-up visa and residence permit should be facilitated, students who are successful and have contributions to the country should be granted a long-term residence and work permit, and even the way of becoming a citizen should be open, general health insurance provisions for international students need to be kept in mind.
6. *Review of the Scholarship System:* the system of scholarships granted by Turkey needs to be watched, the creation of differentiated and thematic scholarship programs should be assessed.
7. *Handling the Turkish Teaching Issue:* the infrastructure for teaching Turkish language as a foreign language should be established, an examination system needs to be developed in order to identify the levels of international Turkish language skills.

SUMMARY

In this study, globalization and internationalization concepts were described and explained in the context of higher education systems around the world and in Turkey. After a careful literature review, Turkey's roadmap, weak points, and strategies in terms of higher education internationalization are explained and possible solutions and advices were proposed. Recruiting the international students has long been on the agenda of Turkey, and a lot of government divisions have been doing researches, conferences, workshops to enhance the conditions and quality. Reviewing the data, it can be again inferred that Turkey will be the rising star of higher education supplier for international students in the following years.

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