

Internationalization and Turkish Universities

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Abstract: *Innovations in technology, particularly in the fields of transportation and communication have eliminated most obstacles to human mobility. As a result, humans have detached themselves from the places where they live, while people movement around the globe has skyrocketed. The emergence of this current trend, is what we call “globalization and internationalization.”. This trend continues to affect every aspect of human life, including the higher education system. Internationalization has changed some parts of the higher education system such as campus and curriculum design; and some new concepts introduced to higher education system such as satellite campuses, distance learning, diploma supplements and fly-in faculties. In such a global setting, where local is excluded, Turkish HEIs can not remain unresponsive to such developments in the tertiary education. Based on this fact, this paper aims to provide an overview of the internationalization of tertiary education and an analysis of the internationalization of Turkish HEIs.*

Keywords: globalization, internationalization, higher education, Turkish universities

1. Introduction

In the past, education was available nationwide but it was offered only at the local level. However, developments in technology have thoroughly changed the world of education. Physical boundaries between countries and social distances between people have disappeared thanks to modern technology used in the fields of transportation and communication. So, people have got enhanced mobilizing and communicating capacity. Alvin Toffler referred to such people as “modular man” and “new nomads” in his classic book Future Shock [1]. People living in the Eastern Europe have joined in this trend and become “modular” or “new nomads” following the fall of communism. This was seen to be a direct result of a new world order, or namely, globalization and internationalization. So, like all other things, education, particularly tertiary education, had its share of this radical development. In today’s world, people would like to study in the institutions, which offer education in better conditions and settings. As a result, the movement of students and faculties around the world has boomed in recent years. Borrowing the terminology of Toffler, “modular students” and “modular faculties” have now become a reality.

Table 1 provides growth in the number of students who enrolled outside their country between 1975 and 2012. It shows that enrollment of international students has risen dramatically (from 0.8 million to 4.5 million) during the past 40 years [2]. If this growth keeps going, there will be 7 million international students around the World by the year of 2025.



Fig. 1: Growth in the number of international students in tertiary education [2].

This growing number of international students in tertiary education has brought competition and important strategic changes among countries since international education provides significant opportunities for them. Spending of international students has a significant share in some national economies such as the USA, Canada, UK and Australia, where many international students study. The benefits of international students are not limited to the economy; they also provide important contributions to intercultural dialog [3].

All of these developments and radical changes in the World order led to a serious international and interinstitutional competition among Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). In such an environment, Turkey can not abstain from the competition that is occurring in the field of international higher education. Turkey should review its position and determine an effective internationalization strategy in the light of current developments and trends occurring in the higher education system.

This paper aims to provide an overview of internationalization in the tertiary education and an analysis of the internationalization of Turkish HEIs.

2. Globalization and Internationalization

Globalization and internationalization have been commonly used terms all over the world since the radical shifts occurred in technology and the world politics. Although these terms seem to be the same thing and are easily confused with each other, they are actually are somewhat different. Before proceeding, we should understand the difference between globalization and internationalization.

Al-Rodhan and Stoudmann compiled and reviewed 114 definitions on globalization, which offered by different authors and institutions between the years of 1974 and 2006. Al-Rodhan and Stoudmann pointed out that the connotation of globalization changed according to the time when the definition was made and which facet(s) of society (economic, politic, social or cultural) was/were referred to by the authors. In other words, globalization meant different things in different times. After reviewing all the 114 definitions, Al-Rodhan and Stoudmann proposed the following definition of the term: “Globalization is a process that encompasses the causes, course, and consequences of transnational and transcultural integration of human and non-human activities.” [4].

As for internationalization, as mentioned before, it is really hard to disentangle internationalization from globalization since these terms are used interchangeably and it is not certain where one starts and the other ends [5]. But, internationalization is a more specific term and somewhat different than globalization. The most distinctive feature between them is that globalization is mostly an integration into a common system, but internationalization is mostly a movement between/among nations [6]. Also, etymologically, internationalization should be understood as a process, which crosses national borders or a process which involves geographically outward movements. But being international doesn't require only an outward movement, it is also possible with an inward movement such as enrolling international students, hiring international staff, accepting international investments.

So, our proposed definition of internationalization is “an ongoing dynamic process adding human or non-human elements which are mostly international into the activity or structure of an institution/organization with either an outward or inward movement”.

3. Internationalization of Higher Education

Universities are the educational institutions, which generate and disseminate knowledge to the masses. But, they significantly changed in terms of their structures and functions since the first known university (Bologna University) was founded in 1088. According to Rifca Hashimshony and Jacov Haina, universities' functionally evolved from cathedral schools to modern educational institutions and physically evolved from a single buildings to mega structures [7]. With regards to their functional evolution, Wissema categorized universities within 3 generations : Medieval Universities as 1st generation universities; Humboldt type Universities as 2nd generation universities and modern universities as 3rd generation universities [8]. The role of first generation universities was to educate people. In the second generation, research tasks were added to this role. Third generation universities are the centers of generating, transferring and implementing innovation, alongside their traditional functions (education and research) [9].

Other than all these structural and functional changes occurred within the last 900 years, universities have faced a new trend that has emerged in the last 3 decades: the internationalization of higher education. In this context, some novelties were introduced to the functions and/or structures of universities as follows: English has

been a lingua franca in scientific activities, cross-border collaborative arrangements have been taken into effect, international content has been added to the curriculum, mobility of students and faculties has been increased, satellite campuses have been built, joint or solo ventures have been initiated, international exchange programs have been promoted, international exchange networks and organizations have been founded, the number of international students and faculties has been raised, virtual learning other than campus learning has also been widespread.

Why so many universities from various countries try to engage themselves in this trend? In the literature, different rationales for the internationalization of higher education were offered by various authors [10]. The common point under these rationales should be to survive in a globalized world or to compete with other educational institutions by attracting international students and providing social, cultural and academic ties.

Perhaps the most attractive side of the internationalization of higher education is the contributions of international students and their dependents to the national economy. In the USA, where many international students flock to, the net contribution to the US Economy by foreign students and their families in the 2013-2014 academic year was \$26.8 billion [11]. This amount is higher than the 2013 annual revenues of some countries such as Morocco, Luxemburg, Belarus, Nigeria, Azerbaijan, Croatia, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Uzbekistan, Serbia and Bangladesh [12]. Due to the economic benefits of internationalization, some authors describe internationalization of HEIs as the “exportation of education” [14]; some authors as “Higher Ed, Inc.” [15] and some authors as “free trade of minds” [11]; So indeed, HEIs have become employers; faculties have become employees and students have become customers for the international education sector [15].

Due to its dynamic nature, the internationalization of higher education is evolving into various stages. In this context, Jane Knight proposes 3 models for international universities: from the first one to the most recent one, classical type, satellite type and co-founded type. Furthermore, the edu-glomerate model is foreseen by her as the future model of internationalization in higher education [16]. On the other hand, an increase in the number of online enrollments has been recently observed in the education sector. A survey by Babson Survey Research Group indicates that on-line enrollment as a percent of total enrollment in the United States have risen from 9.6% to 32% between fall 2002 and fall 2011 [17]. So, our far-fetched opinion is that the ongoing variations in educational internationalization will gradually diminish and distance learning (or immobilization) will replace regular or campus education (or mobilization).

4. Internationalization of Turkish Higher Education

4.1. The Turkish Higher Education System

The first university established in the Modern Turkish Republic is İstanbul University, which was founded in 1933 as the continuation of Ottoman University (Dar-ul Funun). In that time, there were about 2.000 students and 250 professors in this University [18]. Since then, the Turkish Higher Education System has made a profound progress in terms of numbers of universities, students and faculties. Today there are more than 190 universities nationwide, which located in most cities of Turkey. And about 5.000.000 students attend various higher education programs in these universities where 130.000 teaching staff are recruited [19]. Alongside the increase in the number of universities, students and faculties, a significant increase has also been observed in the number of scientific publications from Turkey. In the science rankings list of SJR, Turkey takes 20 out of 239 countries according to the database of Scopus between the years of 1996-2014 [20].

4.2. Internationalization of Turkish HEIs

The Ottoman State, which was the predecessor of modern Turkey, was a great political entity in Europe between the 14th and 20th centuries as it ruled a large number of people who came from different ethnic origins with different religious beliefs and languages. Furthermore, its ruling class was composed of ethnically diverse people for an important part of its history [21]. So, modern Turkey has a vast experience and historical background regarding internationalization. In the era of Ottoman State, Enderun Mektebi (The Ottoman Palace School) and Aşiret Mektebi (The Imperial Tribal School) were good examples of internationalization in the field

of education. The former was a school, which enrolled brilliant and qualified children of Christian families living in the Ottoman lands. Its graduates had been recruited in significant managerial and military positions in the palace. Over the centuries, lots of renowned Ottoman statesmen such as Mimar Sinan (Sinan the Architect or Great Sinan), Sokollu Mehmet Paşa (Admiral Mehmet of Sokol), and Sadrazam Köprülü Mehmet Paşa (Grand Vizier Mehmet Pasha of Köprü) were trained in this boarding school [22]. The latter was a school, which enrolled sons of Arab, Kurdish and Albanian notables. The purpose of the school was to keep the state together and to prevent Arabs from separating away from the state. This boarding school, founded in 1892 by Abdulhamid the Second, was closed in 1907 by virtue of its high cost and insufficient student number attending the school [23].

After modern Turkey (Turkish Republic) was founded in 1923, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of modern Turkey, tried to modernize Turkish State until the year of 1938 (the date he passed away), on the basis of the Western model [24]. An important part of this modernization process was Turkish Higher Education System which was subjected to a radical transformation [25]. Within this context, Dar-ul Funun (Ottoman University) was closed and Istanbul University was founded instead. In this university, 42 of total 180 faculties (23%) were international at the time. These were mostly Jewish scholars who escaped from the Nazi Regime in Germany [26]. Also, Ankara University provided a safe haven for Jewish professors and scientists who had escaped from Nazi persecution in 1934 [26]. The number of international scholars employed by these two Universities reached from 100 to 134 in a short time [27].

However, the real footprints of globalization and internationalization in Turkey, as we know today, take us to the 1980s, since these years were the ones which accepted liberal instead of a social state mentality both in Turkey and the world. This led to important changes in the way people view educational practices, which are one of the most important elements of a social state [28]. After the 1980s, the political and economic stability of the country, global competition in the field of education and foreign investment flow into Turkey resulted in the increase of students who prefer or want to study in Turkey.

In parallel with this changing conjuncture, new legal regulations were taken into effect, important projects were introduced and corresponding institutions were founded. Some major efforts made for internationalization of Turkish HEIs can be summarized as bellows.

- Law No. 2547 (known as YÖK Law in Turkish) which regulated and restructured Turkish Higher Education System thoroughly was issued in 1981. Today this law is still valid and it governs the current Turkish Higher Education System [29]. The Council of Higher Education (YÖK) was established with this law and all the universities in Turkey were collected under the authority of this Council. Law no. 2547 has also enabled private universities to be established through foundations [30].
- Big Student Project (BÖP in Turkish) was launched in 1992. With this project, thousands of students from Turkic Republics and Communities were given scholarships and invited to Turkey in order to be able to study abroad [31].
- Turkey got involved in the European Higher Education Area (Bologna Process) in 2001. In this context; many Turkish universities applied for and took ECTS and diploma supplements. A framework for the European Education Area was founded. Joint diploma programs were launched. And Turkey was accepted to Erasmus Exchange Programs in 2004 [32].
- The Centre For European Union Education and Youth Programs (Turkish National Agency) was founded in 2003. This Centre has been responsible for the coordination of the EU Education and Youth Programs in Turkey such as Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci, Erasmus and Erasmus+ Programs [33].
- Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB) was founded in 2010. This institution took over scholarship programs carried out by the Turkish Ministry of Education as of 1992 [34].
- Turkish Universities Promotion Agency (TUPA) was founded in 2010 and the web portal “www.studyinturkey.com” started to be published in 2012. This web portal aims to assist state and private universities enroll more international students [35].

- The Mevlana Exchange Program was launched in 2013 by Turkish Council of Higher Education (YÖK). This program provides exchange opportunities for students and lecturers between Turkish HEIs and other countries' HEIs [36].
- Financial support have been provided for Turkish and international scholars by TÜBİTAK [37].
- Joint universities or internationally co-founded universities were established with the agreements made with Kazakhstan, France, Kyrgyzstan and Germany Governments respectively. Furthermore, studies for establishing Turkish-Japanese University are still going on [38].
- There has been an increase in the number of universities whose medium of instruction is available completely in English.

In brief, Turkey has made big progress on the internationalization of higher education system in the last 2 decades. However, further projects and strategies should be initiated immediately in order to enhance the internationalization capacity of Turkish HEIs.

5. Conclusion

Human mobility has led to new lifestyles and opened new frontiers to humankind. Yesterday, this mobilization was very limited and only within certain distances (migration of tribes and urbanization). Today, much more mobilization is available and humans can easily reach even the farthest distances of the earth (globalization and internationalization). In the far future, mobilization will be much more advanced and humans will reach to other planets (interplanetaryization).

Today, internationalization is an inevitable process for HEIs since they have to open themselves to foreign markets so as to be able to keep up in a “global” world where “local” is excluded. In such a setting, Turkish HEIs can not remain unresponsive to the developments occurred in tertiary education. Although lots of things have been done on the issue, Turkey should review its position and take all necessary measures in order to keep up with the current developments.

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7. References

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