

## TURKISH HIGHER EDUCATION TODAY: A GLOBALIZATION STORY

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**ABSTRACT.** *In the 21st century, Globalization has become the most significant process. The opportunities which emerged parallel to developing technology have removed the borders between countries and people. From now on, people could simultaneously receive the news from the other end of the world. Besides; after industrial society, the knowledge society which rose with the development of science and technology provides people with any information handily in a short time. The fundamental dynamics of the society, which were based on the power of the machine and people in the industrial society, are now based on acquiring knowledge. Thus; among people, the most crucial power has become knowledge. The knowledge-based society and global structure have resulted in adjustments of various fields, firstly in sociological relations. Education is the most notable of these fields. In the education, higher education is the pioneer of the changes considering that the most part of the academic work has been accomplished by the people of higher education in its institutions. The academic exchange constitutes the remarkable part of the changes in the field of higher education by means of the globalization. In this paper, studies of The Council of Higher Education concerning the globalization of Turkish Higher Education system will be discussed. Additionally, detailed information for Mevlana Exchange Programme, conducted by The Council of Higher Education, will be presented.*

**Keywords:** Globalization, knowledge society, higher education, academic exchange, Mevlana exchange programme

**1. Introduction** “One point is fairly clear. If knowledge is fundamental to globalization, globalization should also have a profound impact on the transmission of knowledge.” (Carnoy and Rhoten, 2002, p.2)

The scientific and technological developments, which have been preceded from the existence of the human beings, have provided the opportunity of emerging and gaining importance of the various facts. Particularly, the developing technology has paved the way for acquiring and sharing knowledge, as a consequence knowledge-based have arisen. Thereby; instead of the industrial society followed by industrial revolution, knowledge society, based on the technological revolution has become the most fundamental power. Industrial society depended on the machines and manpower has been replaced by the power of idea and intelligence. Along with the development of technology, the borders between the countries are no longer an issue. This situation has given the opportunity to receive the news of an event from the other parts of the world. In our century, the knowledge has become a worldwide sharing fact and the globalization has gained importance in parallel to these developments.

**2. Globalization** “Globalization, the process of continuing integration of the countries in the world, is strongly underway in all parts of the globe. Supported by accelerating pace of technological change, by price and trade liberalization, and by growing importance of supranational rules, globalization has exposed national economies to much more intense competition than ever before.” (Mrak, 2000, p.iii) In other respects, “Globalization as a concept has been used in both positive and negative way by different people in different situations. Everyone looks at the concept from his or her point of view and interests. However, there is an agreement among all theorists that globalization has had enormous impact on societies at economic, political, and cultural levels.” (Al’abri, 2011, p.491) Each country regards the globalization of all fields in accordance with its opportunities and potential. The globalization and knowledge society have revealed the necessity for the alterations in all fields, notably in education.

In the international relations, the endeavours for the globalization of the education began in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, particularly in 1945 with the foundation of The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Moreover, many international organizations and institutions such as The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), The European Commission (EC), and The European Council (EC) are working for the globalization of the education. The research and academic publications of these institutions and organizations are crucial for the knowledge-based society.

The sustainability along with the knowledge-based society and the endeavours for globalization has become necessary in education. For instance, The European Commission conducted Lifelong Learning Programme-LLP between 2007 and 2013 in order to support the sustainability of the education. “*The Decision establishing the Lifelong Learning Programme was published in the Official Journal of the European Union L327/45 on 24 November 2006. LLP has a budget of nearly €7 billion for the period 2007 to 2013*” (EC, 2013). The budget for the sustainability of lifelong learning is estimated as 15 billion € in future 2014-2020 Erasmus+. The European Commission’s budget for Erasmus+ is compelling as it is indicating that the member countries are attaching importance for the sustainability in education. Nonetheless, above mentioned endeavours are specifically meant for the field of higher education as “the number of students around the globe enrolled in higher education is forecast to more than double to 262 million by 2025.” (University World News, 2012)

**3. Globalization of Higher Education** “We must ensure our system of higher education offers world-class quality for a world-class economy.” (Taft, BrainyQuote, 2001)

“State support for education in general, and higher education in particular, was more forthcoming prior to the 1980s, when the financial crisis weakened the State and reduced its capacity to fund public investments in many areas. Due to the structural adjustment programmes of the 1980s, policies often curbed public expenditure, resulting in a reduction of public subsidies in all sectors and a decline in investment in ‘unproductive’ sectors, such as education.” (Varghese, 2008, p. 10) However today; according to the statistics of UNESCO and OECD, experts estimate that in higher education, the number of enrolled students around the world will exceed 250 million in the first quarter of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Subsequently, the capacity of the higher education institutions in the world will not meet this massification’s demand. Therefore, many countries are profoundly changing policies by allocating higher budgets.

The massification of the higher education is caused by the rising demand of the traditional students defined between the ages of 18-23 in developing and least developing countries. On one hand, the population of young people in the developed countries is decreasing; on the other hand the demand for the higher education is increasing. This demand is a result of the immigrant and international students. Besides, the age group who wants to enroll in higher education is widening, thus the definition of traditional student is substituted by the new profile of the students between the ages of 24-34. (YOK, 2007) Hence, the number of students enrolled in higher education is gradually increasing in countries all over the world. This increase in quantity has brought about the problems as for the quality and standards of higher education. Consequently, the young people are attempting to obtain various scholarships in order to study abroad. Additionally, the young who wants to be a part of the global market are worried that their education at home is not recognized by other countries. As a result, the young in the least developed and developing countries are seeking for a higher education institution which is recognized globally. According to OECD’s statistics, since 2010 the number of international students in the world is 4.1 millions. This number was 0.8 million in 1975, in 1980 - 1.1 million,

and in 2000 - 2.1 millions. (Kritz, 2012, p. 2) The increase in the last decade shows the estimated numbers will be 8 or 10 million by 2020. Based on the statistics of 2010, the first country to host the most international students is the USA with %16.6; the second is the UK with % 13. The other countries are respectively; %6.6 Australia, % 6.4 Germany, and % 6.3 France. *"The USA is estimated to obtain approximately 20 billion dollars of income by the international students until 2010. Likewise, Australia is considered to obtain nearly 16 billion dollars in the same period."* (Yılmaz, 2012, p.172) The USA and Australia's serious incomes obtained entirely by the globalization of higher education are encouraging for the other countries such as Turkey. As one of the most rapidly developing countries, Turkey is also working hard for a global higher education system.

#### **4. Turkish Higher Education Today** "Ensuring quality higher education is one of the most important things we can do for future generations."(Lewis, BrainyQuoe, 2001)

As one of the most rapidly developing countries of 21st century, Turkey is reforming in the field of education as well as all the other fields within the framework of 2023 vision. The utmost importance has been attached to higher education. There have been many attempts in order to increase the existing number of the universities. In 2006 the number of the universities was 78 in Turkey. However, *'the year 2006 is similar to 1992 since the new universities were founded at the same time. Hence; in various regions of Turkey, 16 universities were founded with the regulation published on 01.03.2006 (num: 5467)'*. (Sargin, 2007, p.144) Afterwards, in 2007 - 22, in 2008 - 15, in 2009 - 9, in 2010 - 17, in 2011- 9, and between 2012 and 2013, 4 universities were founded. In total 92 universities were founded in 8 years. According to The Council of Higher Education, since 2013 there have been 170 universities. This increase is notable considering the other countries in the same years. The work of The Council of Higher Education is definitely not only increasing the quantity of the universities but also, a lot has been done to increase the quality of old universities. For instance, the budget allocated for academicians to research also increased. Accordingly, up to one year academicians could go abroad with the regulation of The Council of Higher Education (num: 2547/7). Additionally, academicians are provided with post-doctoral scholarships as well as other scholarships. In 2011, The Council of Higher Education launched the 'Faculty Development Programme', which was established to train academicians in order to meet the needs of newly found universities, and recruitment of the academicians was increased rapidly. (YOK, 2011) Moreover, the fees for undergraduate and post-graduate students were abolished which was a big step for encouraging the enrolment of the individuals in higher education. *"Additional 548 million TL from 2014 budget was allocated for merely these fees. Also the scholarship for undergraduate student in 2002 was 45 YTL; in 2013 this amount was increased to 280 TL."* (Simşek, 2013, p.81)

Within the framework of 2023 visions Turkey has accomplished many goals in order to increase the qualitative and quantitative facilities of the universities nationally and also internationally. For this purpose the first attempt was integration into the Bologna Process conducted in European Union's Higher Education Institutions. However, this attempt is not the primary goal of the Council of Higher Education. As the president of The Council of Higher Education Prof. Dr. Gökhan Çetinsaya remarked on 25 November 2013, 'The knowledge based is revealed by our country's goal of being one of the biggest economies in the world in 2023. Universities have gained importance more than any other time in this process. [...] for the future of Turkey the globalization of our higher education is inevitable and for this reason the Bologna Process is of course important, yet not the utmost goal just an important means.' The president expressed the three fundamental issues in higher education strategy document of 2023, which will be announced in the following months. These three issues are: turning quantitative development into qualitative development by focusing on the issue of quality, developing the doctoral education both in quantity and quality, and globalization. (Çetinsaya, 2013)

As it is obvious in the 2023 policy of The Council of Higher Education, the globalization of Turkish Higher Education is crucial. Consequently, the international students and international student exchange programmes are regarded as significant. To be able to meet this goal the number of international students is trying to be increased. For instance, The Ministry of Economy financially supports the annual edufairs abroad to introduce the higher education institutes. Moreover, by means of the Presidency of Turks Abroad and Related Communities, the international students have received Turkish Scholarship in order to study in Turkish

universities since 2011. Apart from this, a website designed for the international students who want to study in Turkey. This website of The Council of Higher Education provides the candidate students with the detailed information about Turkey and Turkish universities since 2013. The website is available in English, Turkish and Russian; and later will be available in Arabic. All this endeavours so far is not sufficient to introduce Turkish higher education in global market. In line with the aim of increasing the recognition of the Turkish higher education institutions, The Council of higher Education launched an international student and academician exchange programme named as "Mevlana Exchange Programme".

**5. A Globalization Story: Mevlana Exchange Programme:** Mevlana Exchange Programme is a programme which aims the exchange of students and academic staff between the Turkish higher education institutions and higher education institutions of other countries. With the regulation published in August 23, 2011 (num: 28034), students and academic staff exchange between Turkish higher education institutions and higher education institutions of other countries has been possible.

The programme includes all higher education institutions throughout the world without discriminating between the geographical borders. The higher education institutions of EU countries benefiting from Erasmus programme will not be included in Mevlana Exchange Programme in 2013-2014 academic year.

Students may study abroad for one (minimum) or two (maximum) terms and academic staff may lecture abroad from one week (minimum) to three months (maximum). Accordingly, students and academic staff from any country may benefit from this programme being hosted by Turkish higher education institutions in order to study or lecture.

The primary objective of Mevlana Exchange Programme is to exchange students and academic staff between the Turkish higher education institutions and higher education institutions of other countries. Additionally, Mevlana Exchange Programme aims;

- Making Turkey a centre of attraction in higher education area,
- Increasing the academic capacity of Turkish higher education institutions,
- Contributing to the globalization process of higher education,
- Sharing the historical and cultural heritage of Turkey in a global scale,
- Enriching the culture of respect and tolerance to differences by increasing intercultural interaction.

All academic staff who works in a national or foreign higher education institution, on condition that the higher education institutions signed a bilateral Mevlana Exchange Protocol, may benefit from Mevlana Exchange Programme. This mobility includes educational activities to be performed in host institution. Incoming students and academic staff from other countries to Turkish higher education institutions are granted according to the scholars determined by Council of Higher Education Executive Board.

The current international and regional exchange programmes executed by some countries and regional organizations have limited contribution to the "globalization of higher education" approach of Turkish Higher Education Council. Students who apply to Mevlana Exchange Programme, a significant means of global higher education vision, will have the opportunity to study at a university they desire in any part of the world. (YOK, 2013)

**6. Conclusion:** In accordance with the aforementioned visions of 2023, Turkey aims to be an important part of the field of higher education in the world. Accordingly, Turkey desires to be a centre of international students particularly from the Balkans, the Middle East and the Middle Asia, to all of which Turkey is particularly bounded historically and culturally. Besides, the existing national and international exchange protocols are not sufficient to contribute the globalization of Turkish Higher Education. Turkey is currently the part of the Erasmus exchange programme only. This programme seems to be barely adequate. "The number of outgoing students participated in Erasmus programme in 2010 was 8.993 and incoming was 3.784, in 2011 the outgoing 10.385 and incoming 4.452 and 2012 outgoing 14.052 and incoming 5.389. Although these programmes have been successful and rapidly improved, considering the population of higher education students is exceeding 3 millions in Turkey, it is obvious that these programmes are not sufficient and required to be supported by the other exchange programmes." (Erdogan, 2013, p.48) These statistics led The Council of Higher Education to seek new ways. Following the research,

Mevlana Exchange Programme was launched in the 2013- 2014 academic year. In the worldwide, at first Erasmus+ was financed by European Union and the other members of the programme, and afterwards there are other student and academican programmes between the countries such as University Mobility in the Asia and the Pacific (UMAP) and Belgian American Educational Foundation (BAEF). Most of these programmes are limited to the exchange between two countries. The distinction of Mevlana Exchange Programme is that it is executed and financed only by the Council of Higher Education and intended for all the countries in the world in 2014- 2015 academic year. Finally, Mevlana Exchange Programme discussed as a globalization story in this paper, hopefully will be a success story in future.

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