

# AN OVERVIEW OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION FROM A MACRO PERSPECTIVE

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**Abstract:** Expansion of globalization triggered more people from various walks of life to demand university education, gave rise to the number of higher education institutions and popularization of international education programs. It is a requirement to analyze globalization, internationalization and the international opportunities all shareholders of higher education institutions can benefit in Turkey and around the world. Depicting the present situation, this study is a descriptive survey which involves the results of local and international studies on globalization, internationalization and international education. It also includes the findings of various articles, thesis and books published in different countries. In this study, the effects of globalization, internationalization and their impact on education are examined from educational, cultural and financial aspects. The second part of the study introduces the international opportunities in tertiary education and their application in Turkey.

**Keywords:** International education, globalization, exchange programs

## Introduction

Financial, social, political and cultural developments changed agricultural society into an industrial society and with the advent of new technologies, the world has turned into an information society. Due to the improvements in technology and mass media, social changes and international interactions have gained speed. Therefore, globalization has become inevitable and has given way to transition from information society to communication society by creating a world beyond borders.

Although globalization is defined in various ways by different scientists, most of these definitions focus on the financial aspect of the term. According to Lubers, the word global dates back to 1600s, but the term globalization is a new one (Özkan, 2006). Hirst and Thompson define globalization as a growing flow of commerce among countries and an open international economy which includes investment of capital. However, sociologist Peter Berger describes globalization as the cultural face of a financial based process. Similarly, Giddens explains it as a financial, political, technological and cultural concept (Özkan, 2006). As these definitions indicate, the political and cultural aspects of globalization are inevitable however much the term originally refers to the financial issues. Therefore, focusing only on commercial facet would be misleading.

Globalization is often confused with internationalization, but is in fact a completely different phenomenon. While internationalization refers to the significance of international commerce and relations, globalization refers to global economic integration of national economies into one global economy. Although the relations among nations become constantly necessary and important, the basic focus of internationalization is still the nation. However, globalization is the annulment of national boundaries for financial reasons primarily by free trade and free capital mobility (Daly, 1999). Therefore, the difference lies in their focus. While globalization highlights an economic process, cross-border sharing, common market and dependence; internationalization enhances world view, multicultural approaches and attitudes.

Having different aspects, globalization has brought about new concepts such as competitiveness, global education, global culture, global economy, global policy, democratization, indigenization, privatization and marketization (Şentürk, 2007). In line with the aims of this study, we will focus on the term global education. Global education is a process which enhances the knowledge, skills and behaviours required for surviving in a world of pluralism, international dependence and international financial competition (Özkan, 2006). We aim to highlight relationships and interaction among countries and train new generations who are aware of ethnic values, cultural pluralism and are capable of living in new environments.

## Impact of Globalization and Internationalization on Education

A nation's human capital can be a more significant determinant of its long-term financial success than any other resource. Therefore, this resource must be invested in and used efficiently to develop returns. Although there is

high rate of unemployment around the world, there is also scarcity of skills and talents in global economy, which slows economic growth down if it is neglected. In fact, according to the 2013 Human Capital Index, the countries which are ranked in top 10 are those which invest in education pillar (Zahidi, 2014). Since human capital is attained through education and effects not only one nation but also the whole world, all the educational institutions around the world should take the importance of it into consideration. In this sense, international education and mobility of students and academic staff play an important role. The more all the shareholders of tertiary education internationalize, the more and better talents and experiences they will possess, which will generate a rich human capital all over the world bringing about economic balance.

As a result, like many other institutions, higher education institutions have started to evaluate their missions and responsibilities in search of preparing their graduates as global citizens and professionals in today's world. Therefore, they base their policies on internationalization which Knight (1994) defines as a process of integrating an international dimension into the teaching, research, and service functions of the institution (Jackson, 2008). It is obvious that education plays a crucial role in the process of globalization, for training skillful individuals who can adapt to new challenges becomes essential with the increase in international relations. International education helps developing students' worldview, global identity, intercultural sensitivity (being flexible and tolerant with values and modes of behavior, open-minded, and willing to try new things, especially food) and communicative competence (foreign language proficiency, communication styles).

### **International Opportunities in Higher Education**

Education affects societies in terms of political, social, economical and cultural aspects by providing service to individuals throughout their lives. Therefore, organizing the educational services according to the modern developments in line with the needs of individuals and societies are among the priorities of all the countries in the world. The most important issue of the modern age is human capital for it maintains economical growth and social development and currently, the most powerful countries in the world are those which invest in human capital. Human capital can be expressed as the stock of competencies, knowledge, social and personality attributes, including creativity, cognitive abilities, embodied in the ability to perform labor so as to produce economic value. It is of utmost importance to invest in human being for increasing their abilities and qualifications during the process of becoming an industrial and information society.

When we look at the developed countries in the world, the common features of them are having high-grade universities which are active in international cooperations and research- development technologies. Since investment in education is rewarding for both individual and society, contribution of education in financial growth and the increase of national income are inevitable. Training individuals who can keep up with the technology and contemporary life is only possible through a quality educational system which is rational and universal.

Being aware of these positive effects of internationalization, higher education institutions aim at increasing the opportunities through which students can benefit outside their home countries through bilateral, multilateral agreements, joint projects, dual diploma programs, student and faculty exchange programs, multiple variations of study and residence abroad programs, internships or service learning in a foreign country, intercultural curricula, multilingual curricula, foreign language education, area or cultural studies, international or comparative education programs, offshore campuses and distance learning activities. In line with these goals, higher education institutions not only motivate their students and staff to participate in international programs but also develops their promotional activities by enhancing their organizational images, attending international educational fairs, and visiting foreign countries to establish new contacts. Apart from these, higher education institutions extend their opportunities with the help of grant programmes, volunteer programmes, strategic partnership programs such as

- Mevlana Exchange Programme granted by Higher Education Council of Turkey,
- Erasmus + Exchange Programme granted by European Union,
- Fulbright scholarships supported by the USA government,
- Humboldt Foundation scholarships supported by German Government,
- Jean Monnet scholarships,
- Research and study scholarships supported by different countries
- Student competitions in which students can present their inventions or research results,
- Interrail programs which enables students travel around Europe with a rail pass
- Work and Travel.

With the constant increasing number of universities around the world, the number of students participating in study abroad (SA) programs has been increasing dramatically. The trends in international students tends to be on the rise in the following years because the number of students enrolled outside their home has risen from 0.8 million worldwide in 1975 to 4.3 million in 2011. This number worldwide more than doubled, with an average annual growth rate of almost 7% between 2000 and 2011 (OECD, 2013).

According to the 2007 OECD reports there were 2.7 million students enrolled in higher education outside their home countries in 2004. It is estimated that this number will rise to about 7.5 million by 2025 (Verbik, L. and Lasanowski, V., 2007). Most of these students will be engaged in year abroad programs and short-term sojourns or internships, ranging from a week to 3 or 4 months (Jackson, 2008). However, a more recent study done by OECD (2013) indicates that nearly 4.3 million students are enrolled in tertiary level education outside their home country. Australia, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, New Zealand and Austria have, in descending order, the highest percentage of international students. Among these, Asian students represent the 53% of foreign students most of whom are from China, India and Korea. OECD countries host more international students than they send abroad for university education. Some 83% of all foreign students are enrolled in G20 countries, while 77% are enrolled in OECD countries. These proportions have remained stable during the past decade.

This study also shows that three out of four students studying abroad prefer OECD countries. Australia, Canada, France, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States together attract more than 50% of all foreign students around the world. Europe is the top destination for university students enrolled outside their home country. It hosts 48% of these students while North America hosts 21% of all international students. In the case of Oceania, the number of international students in have tripled since 2000 although the region hosts less than 10% of all foreign students. The numbers of international students are rising in Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, which reflects the internationalization of universities in different countries (OECD, 2013). These results might cause from the effect of exchange programs such as Erasmus Exchange Program as it included only European countries until 2014.

Erasmus Student Mobility will be more reinforced through Erasmus+, the new EU programme for education, training, youth and sport to be started in 2014, which will provide the students with the opportunity to study abroad during the next seven years. According to a statistical report published by European Commission, 3244 students from 11 countries spent a study period abroad under the Erasmus Programme in 1987. 25 years later, in 2011-12, the Programme is nearly 80 times larger, with more than 250,000 students and 46,000 staff spending a mobility period abroad (European Economy, 2009).

However, this situation might change with Mevlana Exchange Program, which is supported by Turkish Higher Education Council and in accordance with today's global academic perception, Mevlana Exchange Programme students and academic staff will have the opportunity to study at a University that they desire in any part of the world except those involved in Erasmus Program. It is not limited with a region, area or certain part of the world.

As in the case in many other countries, globalization has affected the political, financial, social and cultural resources of Turkey, which also has placed Turkey into interaction with the world in terms of education (Çetinsaya, 2014). This is partly due to the geopolitical location of Turkey. Being at the juncture of two continents, Turkey is within easy reach of many countries, which is an advantage to draw students from different parts of the world. This location also provides students with a rich cultural atmosphere and natural beauties, which gives them the opportunity to have fun and extend their knowledge as they study. Turkey is also an appropriate place where the international students can experience the mixture of a variety of cultures blended with both western and orientalist elements. Therefore, students from all parts of the world regardless of their nationalities, origins, religions, languages and etc. are most welcome in Turkey and Turkish hospitality. For this reason, government and higher education institutions should analyze the potentials of the country to intake international students and take necessary precautions accordingly. They can establish consortiums with other universities and contact with international organizations in order to promote Turkish higher education universities abroad. Moreover, international students can prefer Turkey as the cost of living is not so expensive as it is in the most popular countries.

With over 180 higher education institutions, over 140,000 academic staff, around 5.5 million tertiary students and increasing public finance support regardless of the global financial crisis, higher education in Turkey has certain advantages in the context of internationalisation in tertiary schools. These institutions have been experienced in participating in and benefiting from the educational facilities, funding and grants of European Union (Çetinsaya, 2014). On account of this, from now on it is even more easier to comply with the requirements of international

education, propose new projects that can develop global teaching opportunities and bring about exchange of students and staff among the colleges.

### Conclusion

In this sense, institutions of higher education are reevaluating their goals as they try to answer the following question: how can they best meet their students' expectations in terms of providing international programmes for them and upgrading their academic skills in today's diverse world? As a response to this question, higher education institutions are trying to keep up with increasingly interconnected world by encouraging students to receive education outside their home countries due to their ever-increasing cooperations with partners all over the world. The popularity of exchange programs in foreign universities has grown considerably in recent years, also in the universities of Turkey have made profound efforts to attract students from different countries. With these international programmes, students have the opportunities to learn about other cultures, to upgrade their international perspectives and skills and to develop their crosscultural understanding.

As it is a new concept in higher education, internationalization should be considered with more sound and organized strategies in order that Turkish universities can be more effective. Therefore, it should be handled as a government policy and all the plans and legislation should be prepared accordingly. In doing this, it is of utmost importance to maintain quality. In this regard, both the old and newly established universities should do their best in order to offer the best quality education so that it would worth for international students to come all the way from different parts of the world.

It is expected that student mobility will grow, however, institutions are in a competition to accept talented and self-funded students. Therefore, they should improve their recruitment efforts which can be implemented in a shorter time and with reasonable budgets. This is to be done with an awareness of global mobility trends and investment in analysing the decision-making process of their prospective students. (Choudaha and Chang, 2012) For this reason, it is important for these institutions to follow the changes and developments not only in global education but also in the various aspects of higher education.

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