Intellectual Discourse

Volume 27 Number 2 2019

International Islamic University Malaysia
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Intellectual Discourse

Volume 27 Number 2 2019

Intellectual Discourse is a highly respected, academic refereed journal of the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). It is published twice a year by the IIUM Press, IIUM, and contains reflections, articles, research notes and review articles representing the disciplines, methods and viewpoints of the Muslim world.

Intellectual Discourse is abstracted in *SCOPUS, ProQuest, International Political Science Abstracts, Peace Research Abstracts Journal, Muslim World Book Review, Bibliography of Asian Studies, Index Islamicus, Religious and Theological Abstracts, ATLA Religion Database, MyCite, ISC* and *EBSCO*.

ISSN 0128-4878 (Print); ISSN 2289-5639 (Online)

http://journals.iium.edu.my/intdiscourse/index.php/islam
Email: intdiscourse@iium.edu.my; intdiscourse@yahoo.com

Published by:
IIUM Press, International Islamic University Malaysia
P.O. Box 10, 50728 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Phone (+603) 6196-5014, Fax: (+603) 6196-6298
Website:http://iiumpress.iium.edu.my/bookshop

Intellectual Discourse
Vol. 27, No. 2, 2019

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Intellectual Discourse, 27:2 (2019) 335–351

ISSN 0128-4878 (Print); ISSN 2289-5639 (Online)

Higher Education in Turkey: Responding to Sustainable Development Agenda

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Abstract: The study aims to review the literature that analyses the history and current situation of Higher Education (HE), henceforth known as HE, in Turkey and to review HE agenda of the Government of Turkey in order to identify the extent to which it has responded to the sustainable development agenda. This paper recommends ways to improve and develop HE in Turkey so as to make it a significant sector which prepares its stakeholders to achieve sustainable development goals (SDGs). Multiple sources of information: documents on the agenda of Turkey with regard to the objectives of HE; the findings of previous studies undertaken on different aspects of Turkish HE system; and documents prepared by organizations such as YÖK (Turkish Higher Education Council), MEB (Turkish Ministry of National Education) and the World Bank. The analysis of relevant literature suggests that Turkey aims to upgrade the HE system in line with its goals of becoming a more powerful player in the world. The initiatives to enhance enrolment of students at HE institutions; strengthen HE Education Curriculum, internationalise the Turkish HE are in line with the directions that support the attainment of SDGs. The findings provide an account of the HE system in Turkey, both strengths and weaknesses. It enhances understanding on the current situation of HE in Turkey vis a vis the Sustainable Development Goals. The study does not only describe the Turkish HE system, but it provides a case which can be used by HE researchers to study HE in different contexts.

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Keywords: Higher Education, Turkey, Problems in Higher Education, Malaysia, Sustainable Development

Abstrak: Kajian ini bertujuan meneliti dokumen dan tulisan yang menganalisis sejarah dan perkembangan semasa Pendidikan Tinggi (PT) di Turki dan mengkaji agenda PT Kerajaan Turki untuk mengenal pasti sejauh mana ia telah mengisi agenda pembangunan yang lestari. Kertas ini mengesyorkan cara-cara untuk merubah dan membangunkan PT di Turki untuk menjadikannya satu sektor yang penting dalam menyediakan pihak-pihak yang berkepentingan untuk mencapai Matlamat Pembangunan Lestari (SDGs). Ianya melaporkan ulasan dari pelbagai sumber maklumat; dokumen mengenai agenda Turki berkaitan dengan objektif PT; penemuan kajian terdahulu tentang pelbagai aspek sistem PT Turki; dan dokumen yang disediakan oleh organisasi seperti YÖK (Majlis Peningkatan Pendidikan Tinggi Turki), Kementerian Pendidikan Kebangsaan Turki dan Bank Dunia. Analisis tentang tulisan yang berkaitan menunjukkan bahawa Turki berhasrat menaik taraf sistem PT sejajar dengan matlamat untuk menjadikan Turki sebagai penyedia PT yang terbilang di dunia. Inisiatif untuk meningkatkan pendaftaran pelajar di institusi PT; memperkuat Kurikulum Pendidikan PT, mengantarabangsakan Turki adalah sejajar dengan hala-tuju yang menyumbang kepada pencapaian SDGs. Penemuan ini menyediakan satu latar belakang tentang sistem PT di Turki, termasuklah kekuatan dan kelemahannya. Ia meningkatkan pemahaman mengenai keadaan PT semasa di Turki berbanding dengan Matlamat Pembangunan Lestari. Kajian ini bukan sahaja menerangkan sistem PT Turki, tetapi ia menyediakan satu kes yang boleh digunakan oleh penyelidik PT untuk belajar tentang PT dalam konteks yang berbeza.

Kata Kunci: Pendidikan Tinggi, Turki, Matlamat Pembangunan Lestari, Malaysia,

Introduction

Turkey, as a developing country, aims to possess a well-educated workforce that will catch up with its political and economic goals. Accordingly, Turkey aims to form sound social, economic and cultural relations abroad in order to maintain and upgrade its role in the future. The aims have been linked to the development of higher education (HE) which was mandated to play significant roles in supporting the national development goals of Turkey through its education, research, and public services (Mizikaci, 2006).

The establishment of the modern HE system in Turkey dates back to the 18th century during the Ottoman Empire reign. The system underwent various changes throughout the tremendous and terrific events that affected the final decades of the Ottoman Empire. The changes in HE system similarly reflected the political and social changes in the newly-established Turkish Republic (Aslan, 2014). The first higher education institution dates back to 1773, before the republic era (Baskan, 2001). However, the number of HE institutions (HEIs) in Ottoman Empire time were limited and they mainly focused on military technology and engineering. The goal of HE in this era was to train students for a degree in engineering and technical issues, and the main focus was military technology. Accordingly, it is no coincidence that the first two HEIs in the Ottoman Empire were Mühendishane-i Bahri-i Hümayun and Mühendishane-i Berri-i Hümayun which were schools of engineering.

After the Turkish Republic was founded in 1923, HE system was given more importance in order to catch up with the world. The first significant regulation was done in 1933. In 1946 and 1973, further revisions were made to revolutionize the system. Mizikaci (2006) reported that until 1981 there were four types of HLIs in Turkey, namely universities, academies, vocational schools, and teacher training institutes. Their roles were to promote economic, social, ideological and scientific development. This required certain standards of HE provision among HEIs so as to ensure that all institutions were of the same direction in advancing the development in Turkey.

However, especially after the 1973 regulations, there were growing concerns. The main problem was that there was no central control system for the different universities and this resulted in huge variations in the goals, teaching styles and programs they offered. This resulted in many incompatibilities and there was difficulty in finding equivalency of the diplomas the universities offered. These problems, in addition to the will of the military coup makers (1980 military coup), led to a new regulation in 1981, higher education law (no. 2547), which is still mostly at work today. Accordingly, in the following sections the changes made in 1981 will be elaborated in relation to the philosophy and goals of HE in Turkey.

Sustainable Development (SD) as a term and idea has entered the education context only in recent decades. SD can be defined as an

agenda to equip individuals with competencies that enable them to lead a quality life and advance well-being among people hence, trying to eliminate poverty in society. Sustainability in a general sense has been discussed since the Bruntland Report in 1987 (Tuncer, 2008), however, its appearance and application in education took place much later. The implementation of education for SD in the curriculum is a must for raising the awareness of people about the SD issues such as poverty, environmental problems and increasing the level and extent of education. SD has already been integrated into the curriculums, but in developing countries it is still not acknowledged at a satisfactory level. For example, in Turkey there is not a coherent strategy and there are not enough studies done on SD for education (Öztürk, 2017). In this sense, the HE in Turkey and also other developing countries should systematically integrate SD into the curricula and the students should be equipped with this 21st century concept.

HE in Turkey, which are compatible with the Bologna three-cycle system (YÖK, 2014), includes all post-secondary education institutions which offer at least a program of two years of education. At the end of secondary education, students in Turkish secondary schools take centralized examinations whose result determines their chance to gain admission into a university programme. In 2001, 50% of Turkish individuals at the age of 20-24 received lower secondary education while the rate of enrolment in HE was lower than 25% of the age group. The low access to HE education suggests that lower proportion of the population have received education which equips them with job-related competencies, somewhat not available at secondary level education (Mizikaci, 2006). For those who did not pursue higher education, they had high likelihood of facing problems in earning a living due to the lack of basic knowledge and skills which were only provided by HEIs.

HE in Turkey has been developed to play significant roles for both the national and international community (Özoğlu et al., 2012). It has gone through various critical changes and development, all which are beneficial to the many parties in Turkey, including the stakeholders outside Turkey. Turkey, in its Ninth Development Plan, aims to increase educational attainment and develop a life-long education strategy to meet the requirements of a changing and developing economy. To meet its goals, Turkey requires education systems that are more flexible,

more effective and more easily accessible to a wider range of national and international students.

Accordingly, the objective of this paper is to review the literature that analyses the history and current situation of HE in Turkey and to review the Higher Education agenda (e.g. goals) of the Government of Turkey in order to identify the extent to which it has responded to the sustainable development agenda.

Method

Multiple sources of information have been analysed, including documents on the agenda of Turkey with regard to the objectives of Higher Education; the findings of previous studies undertaken on different aspects of Turkish Higher Education system; and documents prepared by organizations such as YÖK (Turkish Higher Education Council), MEB (Turkish Ministry of National Education) and the World Bank. The information gathered was analysed to highlight themes which correspond to the areas and issues that pertain to SD agenda.

Findings

The Goal of HE in Turkey: Attending to Sustainable Development Goals

The notion of Sustainable Development refers to development agenda that meets the needs of the present generation without neglecting opportunities for the future generations to meet their own needs (United Nations General Assembly, 1987). This effort requires individuals to be equipped with the right knowledge, skill and values among individuals at all levels and professions. This is achievable if there is a good agency which takes the roles of equipping individuals with desired qualities, a role which has been mandated to HE system. In short, education plays pivotal role in the SDG agenda in that it helps a country to equip its citizens (and the citizen of others) to have good livelihoods and eliminate negative or unwanted life circumstances.

The goals of Turkish HE

The administration of HE in Turkey was reconstructed in 1981 via higher education law (no. 2547). A centralized system was set up and all the HE institutions started to be governed by the Council of Higher Education (In Turkish: Yüksek Öğretim Kurulu, or YÖK). A central university

exam was introduced and placement system was standardized. In this way, higher education was centralized. Also, the 2547 Law allowed the foundation of non-profit private universities starting from 1984. Considering the 2547 Law, the main goals of Turkish HE entail the (i) massification of HE; (ii) centralization and accreditation of universities: and (iii) preparing human resources in accordance with the development plans of Turkey. (Başkan, 2001; Gür & Çelik, 2016):

Before the 2547 Law, universities in Turkey did not have an organized structure and this resulted in incompetencies among the universities. For example, for the same degree, some universities offered 2-year programs while others offered 4-year programs. Moreover, the same courses offered in different universities varied significantly content-wise. These kinds of issues caused administrative problems and some students faced losses in their rights. Accordingly, the 2547 Law, via the Council of HE, centralized the procedures and applications in state universities and the system was standardized. Also, at that time HE in Turkey was limited in terms of the number of both universities and students. The population of Turkey was in steep increase, but the HE system could not catch up with this and young people suffered from lack of HE opportunities. There were only 19 universities in Turkey before 1982, but this rapidly increased to 27 after the 2547 Law and the number reached 51 in 1992 (Başkan, 2001). However, this massification also caused problems despite its benefits, which will be detailed in the following section.

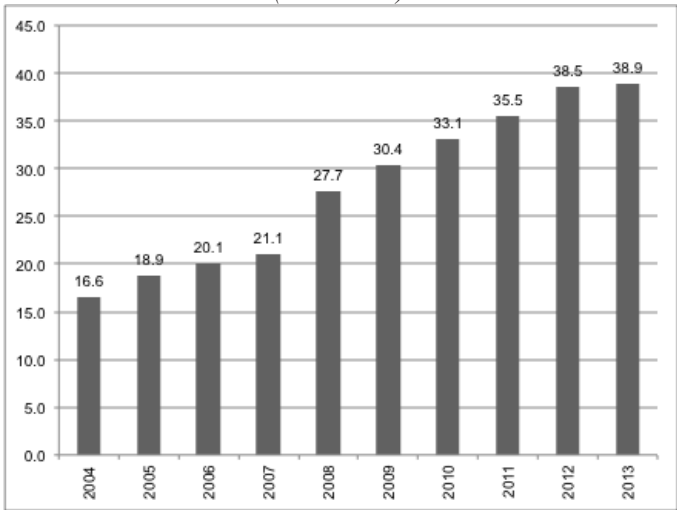
Turkey has attracted international students from Turkic countries such as Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan who share the same culture and origin with Turkey (Koçyiğit & Erdem, 2015). The other group of international students come from Muslim countries such as the ones in the Middle East, Africa, Asia, Caucasus and the Balkans. They are attracted to study in Turkey as a result of its recent economic development and international reputation. Tuition fees are also very low for international students in Turkey compared to the European Union and the United States of America. Living costs are also relatively much cheaper in Turkey. There is a strong need for the improvement of internationalization in Higher Education (HE) sector as the competition with the leading countries is quite challenging.

Ensuring Sustainable Development Agenda

The massification and funding of HE in Turkey

The 1981 HE law is still in effect, but in accordance with the new goals of Turkey after 2006, Turkey started to increase the number of students accepted at current universities and also new universities were opened to achieve massification of HE. Accordingly, Turkey almost doubled its budget for HE and also the salaries of the faculty was increased by 30 % in 2016 (Gür, 2016). Today, almost half of the Turkish students can pursue university education (Gür, 2016). The number of universities has doubled since 2006 (Figure 1) and as of 2017, there are 185 universities in Turkey (YÖK, 2017). These universities are recognized by the Council of HE. Considering these developments and especially considering the steep rise in the participation rates into Turkish HE (Figure 1 below), it can be suggested that massification is mostly achieved in Turkey (Koçyiğit & Eğmir, 2015), making the country much closer to meeting one of the characteristics of a developed country status. This is in line with the SDG agenda which underscores the roles of HE system to support and substantiate the development of a country, particularly in informing policy makers on the possible right ways forward to the country's socio-economic directions.

Figure 1 - The Net Participation to Higher Education for 18-22 Year Olds (2004-2013)



Source: Obtained from MEB (2015).

However, rapid massification has caused some problems for Turkish HE. The first issue is the number of students. Most of the new universities suffer from lack of academic staff and as a result, the quality of academic activities, including teaching and learning processes becomes affected... The statistics show that the number of HE students increased from 2 million in 2004 to 5.5 million in 2013 (Özoğlu et al., 2015). This demonstrates that the number of students increased three times while the number of faculty increased from around 80,000 to only 150,000 in the same period (Gür, 2016). This means that there is an imbalance between the increase in the number of students and the faculty. The need to deal with increasingly huge number of students has, to an extent, jeopardised the quality of teaching and learning, let alone the research-related activities. If this persists, then the effort to empower people, so as to ensure a sustainable future, is at risk.

Secondly, in parallel with the imbalance in the increase of number of students, Turkish universities seem to suffer from serious financial issues (Arap, 2010). The universities cannot get enough funds from the state, which affects their performance, especially the very new universities which do not have many options to make money. In effect, they could not avail good infrastructure, including the teaching and learning facilities. Since Turkish HEIs do not charge any tuition fees on students at undergraduate degree level, their financial capacities worsen. This is in line with findings of many studies conducted on HEIs without tuition fees, such as that of OECD report (2013) which suggested that the universities in countries which provide free access to higher education experience financial difficulties.

The HE Curriculum

In Turkish HE curricula, Turkish Higher Education Council (YÖK) has a dominant role. YÖK predefines some compulsory modules for each department and most of the selective courses are defined by Turkish Higher Education Council. There are some compulsory courses which must be attended to by all the university students in Turkey. These are: Turkish language, the history of the foundation of the Turkish Republic and the independence war (shortly referred to as the history of the revolution) and English language lessons. Turkish language, the history of the revolution and the English language lessons are typically offered in the first and second years of the undergraduate degrees. Other

than these obligatory courses, each department may decide to include a range of selective courses depending on the degree they offer. For instance, an English language teaching department can incorporate a special education module into their program to increase their students' awareness regarding students who have special needs.

In the initial years of the Turkish Republic, the main aim of the universities was to prepare students for certain jobs: teachers, architects or engineers, necessitating the universities to design specific curriculum accordingly. However, after the widespread globalization in the 90s, the Turkish HE started to incorporate lessons which prioritise individual development and more selective courses were allowed so that students can choose in which aspect they want to develop themselves. In some leading universities such as Boğaziçi University, they have a more independent style, which enables them to prepare their curriculum in a much more independent manner compared to most state universities.

It can be argued that Turkey struggles to adjust the curricula of the HE institutions with regard to its policies and the needs of the era, but the system is still too strict and universities do not have much control over their curriculum. This may threaten the universities' prospect of an individual focus and development. However, it must be noted that recently the government has some precautions, leading them to allow some universities to focus and specialise on certain subject areas. For instance, some universities, such as Gebze Technical University and Erzurum Technical University, were made to focus on engineering while some others under the name of Social Sciences University specialise in social sciences.

To sum up, as far as curriculum is concerned, the design of HE curriculum in Turkish HEIs has been driven by the need to have certain criteria or values among students. With the change of social, political and ideological scenario, various HE reviews have taken place. The ultimate aim of curriculum design or reform is to develop graduates' competencies and improve their quality, hence enhance the ability to fare well in the society and the world of work. Given that developing competent graduates is essential for enabling the students to realize social and economic transformation, the design of curriculum which attend to the need of stakeholders is highly appropriate. It is also in support of the sustainable development agenda which strives to empower individuals

to change the way they think and work so as to ensure a sustainable future.

The internationalisation of Turkish Higher Education

The Turkish HE system has embarked on strategic initiatives, characterised by significant HE development and changes that befit the agenda of making Turkish HE highly-reputable in the international arena. As result, the Turkish HE system has improved its international profile; and received increasingly high enrolment of international students in Turkish HEIs.

Turkey has actively participated in the Bologna Process, which defines the European Higher Education Area. The Bologna Process has been an important opportunity for reconstruction and internationalization of the Turkish HE system. Accordingly, in order to improve the quality, recognition and visibility of HE institutions at an international level, the Council of HE in Turkey, being the national authority of Bologna Process, has implemented relevant practices. One such practice is the implementation of various projects for the National Teams of Bologna Experts. The projects have been financed by the European Commission and coordinated by the Council of HE since 2004. In addition to these projects, the Council integrates all HEIs in Turkey to the European Higher Education Area. Consequently, academic staff, administrative staff and students have crucial roles in the implementation of this process so as to contribute in the development of Turkish HE system. Up until now, Turkey has mostly achieved massification of participation in HE and the number of universities in Turkey has doubled in the last decade (YÖK, 2017) However, what is needed in Turkish HE is achieving a more qualified system in addition to supporting the massification agenda, a critical need and aspiration of Turkey in order to accomplish its potential in the world arena.

The structure and administration of HE in Turkey

A worth discussion in the discussion of HE management is associated with the incumbents of HE Institutional Management positions. In Turkey the Rector leads the Senate, implements the regulations, and ensures co-ordination in the university. The Senate is the governing body of a university in terms of academic affairs which is composed of the rector, vice-rectors, deans, graduate school directors and the post-secondary

vocational schools, as well as a teaching staff members elected for each faculty for a three-year term. The University Administrative Board is led by the rector and the other members are deans and three professors who are appointed by the Senate for a four-year period. (YÖK, 2014).

In state universities, for the rector-ship, six candidates are elected by the faculty members via a secret ballot. Council of HE proposes, three of those six candidates to the President of Turkey, who then makes the final selection and appoints the rector. However, as a result of the military coup attempt on the 15th of July in 2016, state of emergency is declared and temporarily rectors are directly assigned by the president of Turkey. In non-profit foundation universities, the selection of candidates and the appointment of the rectors are done by the Board of Trustees. The dean of a faculty is appointed by Council of HE from among three candidate professors nominated by the rector.

The Focus on an Advanced Degree

As for degrees offered in Turkish HE institutions, an associate`s degree is awarded for two-year programs which are offered by post-secondary vocational schools. However, students need to complete 4-year programs to earn a Bachelor`s degree. This duration is 5 years for dentistry and veterinary medicine and it is 6 years for medicine. The degree obtained from these three fields are the equivalent of a Master`s degree (YÖK, 2014).

The graduate and PhD system in Turkey is very similar to international norms. A Master`s degree is a two-year program and it is offered with or without a thesis. However, most of the programs offered in Turkey requires the completion of a thesis. A Doctoral degree is usually a 4-year program. The program requires taking a minimum of seven courses, a dissertation and the oral defence of the dissertation. The defence is oral and it is made in front of a dissertation committee. A master`s degree is required for doing a PhD, but students with a Bachelor`s degree can apply for integrated PhD programs which last for 5 years (YÖK, 2014).

Discussion

Countries that invest heavily and effectively in education and skills to produce information and knowledge will benefit economically and socially. The European Union (EU) has set the goal to turn Europe

into the most competitive and flexible knowledge-based economy in the world (World Bank, 2007). Turkey, in its Ninth Development Plan, also aims to increase educational attainment and develop a life-long education strategy to meet the requirements of a developing economy. To meet its goals, Turkey requires an education system that is more flexible, more effective and more easily accessible.

As discussed in the previous sections, Turkey has experienced five major regulations to improve its HE in order to meet its goals. The final regulation of 2547 Education Law in 1981 is still at work. The aim of this Law was to achieve massification of HE, centralization and accreditation of the universities, and preparing quality work force and human resources in accordance with the development plans of the state. The review of the studies and statistics suggest that massification goal has been mostly realised. Turkey has multiplied the number of students in HE system almost by three (Özoğlu et al., 2015) and around two-thirds of people between the ages of 18-22 are in HE system now. Therefore, it can be argued here that, in Martin Trow's (1970, 1974, cited in Gür, 2016) terminology, Turkey has achieved massification and now it moves from a mass to a universal higher education system. As Koçyiğit and Erdem (2015) states, international students only constitute about 1% of the students at universities in Turkey (Koçyiğit & Erdem, 2015, p. 216). Moreover, it can be argued that the expansion of HE in Turkey is a success, but it must be directed into being an international system. The second main goal of Council of HE in Turkey, which is the centralization of the system, is also achieved thanks to the power Council of HE that is exerted on universities. Now, it can be argued that the university system is consistent and aligned internally as well as being adapted to the international system through systems such as Bologna Process.

However, there are also some issues faced in Turkish HE system. The first group of criticisms comes as a reaction to the outputs of rapid massification. The imbalance between the increase in the number of students and faculty are demonstrated by Gür (2016). He has shown statistically that while the number of students has risen around three times in the last decade, the increase is less than twice in the number of lecturers. Before the rapid massification, there used be one lecturer for every 25 students while it has risen to almost 37 students per lecturer. This means that lecturers have to deal with 50% more students

compared to only a decade ago and this definitely has negative effects on the quality of education in HE system. Moreover, as a result of the rapid massification and foundation of many new universities, these new universities have difficulty in finding faculty (Özoğlu et al., 2015). These universities have difficulty in especially recruiting experienced and qualified lecturers. Most experienced faculty do not want to work at these universities for two reasons. Firstly, most of these universities are in rural and underdeveloped parts of Turkey. Secondly, as these universities are new, they face many technical and economic problems. This significantly decreases the quality of education in these newly-built universities. Then, it can be argued that there is a substantial shortage of faculty in especially the new state universities in Turkey. This shortage is both quantitative and qualitative. These universities cannot only attract sufficient numbers of faculty members, but also they have an even more difficulty in attracting qualified and experienced faculty. This is mainly because, there is a mismatch between the increase in the number of students and the number of the faculty members.

There are also some relevant precautions taken by the government and Council of HE. In order to fill the huge gap in the number of faculty members, the government sent about 2.800 graduate students abroad on a scholarship so that these students study there, and return back and teach at the newly established universities. There was also a similar domestic program for research assistants who were expected to have education in well-established universities in Turkey and after, they are supposed to work at newly established universities (Gür, 2016). However, these attempts partly failed after the coup attempt in 2016, although qualified academicians are still recruited through these programs, especially using programs where in which students are sent abroad. The interior one, on the other hand, seems to be cancelled and further students are not accepted. Rather, some scholarships are offered under YÖK now.

Some other precautions taken by the Council of HE in Turkey to improve the quality of higher education include increase of salary by 30 per cent in 2014, a performance pay was also introduced. The faculty gets paid extra money for academic works he/she creates in a year. It can be argued here that these two attempts together are great incentives for faculty to work in public universities. Also, the government pays more money to the faculty members working at universities that are located in underdeveloped areas of Turkey. These three incentives of

government for increasing the quality of HE in Turkey are fair and efficient tactics, and they contribute to the quality of the system in a positive way. But, still these incentives need to be more target-specific and contextual variances must be checked carefully to ensure that these incentives serve their intended purposes.

One another issue is the financial sustainability of the Turkish HE. As there is no tuition fee for HE in Turkey starting from 2013 and as most of the new universities do not have diverse links and potential to make money, as Kurt and Gümüş (2015) argues, the responsibility for economic sustainability solely lies on both the government and the universities. Most of the universities in Turkey do not have efficient links with the community and businesses. When this is combined with the absence of the income from tuition and registration fees, HE system in Turkey faces great financial troubles. Accordingly, the universities should diversify their income options and they should focus more on producing applications into real life. The suggestion of World Bank (2007) that free education does damage to sustainability of HE systems is also a valid one in that free education may be misused and the sharing of the cost of education with individual students may be a logical move. However, these poses economic as well as political challenges. Free education system may be maintained for the lower classes of the society, but this will probably be unsustainable for the whole country. So, a tuition fee with regard to the income of students may be introduced. However, this area is a very complicated one as there are too many issues and thus, this area needs to be studied more to understand the benefits and disadvantages of free tuition policy at public universities in Turkey. To sum up the argument on financial sustainability of HE system in Turkey, there is a need for the universities in Turkey to increase and diversify their sources of income in line with Kurt and Gümüş's (2015) suggestion and free HE for everybody may be reconsidered, but this becomes a very sensitive issue.

The problems around massification, lack of experienced and unqualified faculty and the overwhelming issue of finance does damage to the HE system in Turkey. These problems will also do damage to the internationalization of Turkish HE system. The inherent problems faced in the system also have the potential to prevent international students from choosing Turkey and if sufficient precautions are not taken starting from the initial phases, this can damage the prestige of

Turkish universities which will have a significant negative effect on the image of Turkish HE institutions in the long run.

Finally, the 2547 Law that was enacted in 1981 is worth some discussion. Considering the problems of Turkish HE in the 70s, 2547 Law definitely helped Turkish HE in some respects. It helped in massification of HE, increasing the number of universities and centralising the system by which alignment and accreditation of the universities both within the country and also by international organizations were achieved in a general sense. Moreover, the amount of publication has risen and universities have become better connected to the universities within the system itself and also, they have become better connected to the systems below them (e.g. secondary schools). However, especially with recent trends throughout the world, 2547 Law has proven some problems for Turkish HE system. Firstly, it has decreased the autonomy of the universities which decreases the flexibility of the universities. For instance, as a result of the centralized system, universities cannot adapt to regional variables or needs and they cannot contribute to the sustainable development of their environment. So, despite having both criticisms and advantages, the 2547 Law definitely served for some significant purposes, but now in order to aim higher for Turkish HE and considering the future goals of Turkey, a new law is necessary. It may be suggested that the focus in this law should be quality and internationalization considering the discussion above.

Conclusion

This study has set out to review the literature that analyses the history and current situation of Higher Education in Turkey in relation to the Higher Education agenda (e.g. goals and 2547 Law) of the government. The paper has also aimed to identify and discuss the issues related to Higher Education system in Turkey and to make suggestions to improve and develop the issues and areas in Turkish Higher Education with regard to the discussion regarding purposes of HE above. Multiple sources of information were used as data in this study: the documents on the agenda of Turkey with regard to the objectives of Higher Education, the findings of previous studies undertaken on different aspects of Turkish Higher Education system and documents prepared by organizations such as YÖK (Turkish Higher Education Council), MEB (Turkish Ministry of National Education) and World Bank. The analysis

of the literature and the agenda of the government suggest that Turkey aims to upgrade the Higher Education system in line with its goals of becoming a more powerful player in the world. The findings suggest that Turkey has achieved massification, centralization and integration to the international system. However, despite these accomplishments, especially the rapid massification, it has brought about some negative outcomes. The main problems, which are also interrelated, are the decrease in the quality of education in HE system, lack of sufficient and qualified faculty, financial and infrastructure problems, and severe problems with the newly-built universities face. Some suggestions regarding the financial sustainability and the quality of education in HE system have also been mentioned. To sum up, this study has provided an account of the Higher Education system in Turkey, both strengths and weaknesses. The discussion in this study also provides a case, to be compared and contrasted with, which can be used by the researchers studying Higher Education in different contexts, especially in those other developing countries such as Malaysia.

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In This Issue

ISSN 0128-4878 (Print)

ISSN 2289-5639 (Online)

ISSN 0128-4878
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