International Student Selection Process in Turkey: Characteristics, Challenges and Opportunities

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the characteristics, problems and possible solutions in the international student selection process faced by higher education institutions in Turkey. The study group is composed of academic and administrative executives who are involved in the foreign student selection process of 5 universities in the Aegean region, the Marmara region, the Western Black Sea region, the Eastern Black Sea region and the Eastern Anatolia region. The research is designed with a case study of qualitative research methods. Semi-structured interview form was used in data collection process and data was analysed by content analysis method. According to the results of the research, the most common cases of higher education institutions in foreign student selection process are; management process of application processes, organization and transparency problems in exams, lack of cooperation between institutions, false document and document verification problem, inability to follow the applicants at the national level, high record deletion, quota of not filling the quota, preference infinity, special talent exam problem, shortcomings of legislation, central database deprivation, lack of centralized control and lack of personnel. Possible solutions have been developed in order to eliminate these problems.

Keywords: Foreign Student, Foreign Student Examination (FSE), International Student Selection

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INTRODUCTION

Important technological developments in the last century have eliminated the concept of border crossing between countries. People can easily travel out of the country due to work, education, sightseeing etc. reasons and the number of this group increases day by day. This situation has brought important changes and developments in education opportunities abroad. Globalization, the willingness of states to gain competitiveness, and the policies of international organizations also have an impact on international student processes (Bloom, 2006). International students are an important part of the contextual background of globalisation (Montgomery, 2010).

The number of international students in the world has increased significantly in recent years. International students are becoming a major market that makes an important source of income and makes a significant contribution to the world economy. (Alimukhamedov, 2015; Levent & Karaevli, 2013; Tekelioğlu, Başer, Örtlek & Aydınlı, 2012; Kıroğlu, Kesten & Elma, 2010). Therefore, the internationalisation of higher education has gained an important place not only for educational and scientific reasons but also because of socio-economic concerns (Chen, 2010). This market has become a multi-billion dollar sector worldwide (Cheung, Yuen, Yuen, & Cheng, 2011). The United States of America host the highest number of international students in the world. While the number of international students in US higher education was 310,000 in 1980, this number reached 1,094,792 in 2017 and according to the US Department of Commerce, these students made a contribution of US $ 42 billion to the American economy in 2017 (IIE, 2018). International students are an important part of cultural interaction and political connection, as well as financial gain for the countries where they study. For this reason, many countries, which want to be effective in the world, are offering education to more international students and aiming to strengthen these students' ties with their countries. With this dimension, international students have become an indicator of a country's soft power capacity (Popa, 2014).

Many developed and developing countries have invested heavily in educational institutions in the last 30 years. However, the problem of the decrease in the population growth rate seen in many of these countries in recent years raises the risk that the existing educational infrastructure and resources will remain above the national need and work with low capacity. This situation carries very important risks for the continuation of the existing system. Qualified educational institutions created with large investments are trying to protect their systems by making more use of the international student market. For example, China, which reached the highest level of 125 million students in 2008, is expected to decrease to 69 million in 2050 (AEI, 2006). Turkey is seen trying to make recruiting more international students in recent years which cannot be filled by national quotas in order to protect the continuity of national students or student quota given by the Higher Education Council. This poses similar risks to the education system of many developed and developing countries on a global scale. Therefore, the internationalization of higher education institutions is becoming a very important phenomenon.

International students have emerged as an important concept for both material and political power. The internationalization of higher education has a positive impact on the ability of governments to produce policy (Lau & Lin, 2017; Viczko & Tascón, 2016; Wadhwa & Jha, 2014). For this reason, governments attach great importance to attracting more foreign students to their country (Gromov, 2017). At the same time, qualified graduate international students increase the scientific research capacity and international competitiveness of the universities they study at (Özer, 2012). International students are becoming the main characteristic element of college degree education institutions (Wang & Li, 2016). More and more countries are trying to gain a stronger position in the international student market. While Turkey was an international student sending country for years, now offers a significant number of students learning service in recent years (Şahin & Demirtaş, 2014). Turkey is becoming a major point in training and developing a common culture (Yardımcıoğlu, Beşel & Savaşan, 2017). Increasing the number of students in Turkey causes several problems experienced in the selection process for international students. When the literature is examined, it is seen that the researches about the problems experienced in these processes are almost none, but the researches are

mostly done on the cultural, social, economic and language problems of the students. (Başaran-Alagöz & Geçkil, 2017; Gökyer, 2017; İnce & Koçak, 2018; Kıroğlu, Kesten & Elma (2010), Kumcağız, Dadashzadeh & Alakuş, 2016; Şahin & Demirtaş, 2014; Usta, Sayın & Güzelipek, 2017; Yıldırım & Köksal, 2017; Yiğit, 2012; Zavalsız& Gündağ, 2017).

Aim of this study is to examine the scope of the status of international student selection and placement process in Turkey institutions and organizational activities and to develop solutions that would eliminate the problems encountered in this process.

International Students in Turkey

The number of international students studying in Turkey in the last 10 years has increased from 15.893 students 125.138 students. The number of students by educational levels and gender is given in Table 1.

Table 1. Numbers of International Students in Turkey Studying by Education Level Between the years 2015-2018

Year	Associate Degree			Undergraduate			Postgraduate/Master			Doctorate			Total		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
2015	2.943	1.397	4.340	34.978	15.102	50.080	8.176	4.514	12.960	3.538	1.530	5.068	49.635	22.543	72.178
2016	3.178	1.657	4.835	41.956	18.541	60.497	10.572	5605	16.177	4.450	1.944	6.394	60.156	27.747	87.903
2017	3.819	2.380	6.199	50.295	24.826	75.121	12.430	6.700	19.130	5.310	2.316	7.626	71.857	36.222	108.076
2018	5.212	3.388	8.600	58.753	30.628	89.381	12.307	6.820	19.127	5.511	2.519	8.030	81.783	43.355	125.138

M – Male, F – Female, T – Total (YÖK, 2015a; YÖK, 2016a; YÖK, 2017a; YÖK, 2018a)

When the table is examined, it is seen that the maximum number of students in all years is at the undergraduate level, then at the level of master, doctorate and associate degree. The number of male students is almost twice that of female students. The number of students in 2018 increased by 73% in 4 years compared to 2015.

Table 2. Numbers of International Students Graduated from Turkey by Education Level Between the years 2013-2016

Year	Associate Degree			Undergraduate			Postgraduate/Master			Doctorate			Total		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
2013	117	97	214	1.288	710	1.998	490	295	785	79	36	115	1.974	1.138	3.112
2014	141	124	265	1.633	882	2.515	806	387	1.193	101	51	152	2.681	1.444	4.125
2015	186	122	311	2.202	1.117	3.319	1.023	594	1.617	155	56	2111	3.569	1.889	5.458
2016	273	232	505	2.821	1.547	4.368	1.438	733	2.171	231	94	325	4.763	2.606	7.369

M – Male, F – Female, T – Total (YÖK, 2014; YÖK, 2015b; YÖK, 2016b; YÖK, 2017b;)

The increase in the number of students is similar in the number of graduates. The number of graduates in 2016 increased by 136% compared to 2013. The countries sending the most students to Turkey in last four years are given in Table 3.

Table 3. Countries Having the Most Students in Turkey

Country	2014-2015			2015-2016			2016-2017			2017-2018		
	R	N	T	R	N	T	R	N	T	R	N	T
Syria	3	2.785	5.560	3	3.746	9.689	1	5.150	15.042	1	7.074	20.701
Azerbaijan	1	3.692	10.638	1	3.233	12.504	2	3.493	14.878	2	3.791	17.088
Turkmenistan	2	2.647	9.092	2	2.472	9.903	3	2.445	10.418	3	3.778	12.247
Iran	4	915	5.302	4	1.155	5.661	4	1.121	6.099	4	1.351	6.418
Afghanistan	5	1.149	3.672	6	988	4.338	5	1.311	5.251	5	1.403	5.826
Iraq	6	1.402	3.033	5	1.569	4.414	6	1.285	5.012	6	1.762	5.187
Germany	23	197	728	26	162	722	7	780	3.755	7	817	4.012
Greece	7	377	1.826	8	453	1.993	8	487	2.285	8	560	2.546
Bulgaria	16	207	1.011	20	159	994	10	631	2.030	9	752	2.510
Somalia	19	209	915	13	542	1.383	13	588	1.735	10	878	2.310
China	13	297	1.088	15	305	1.297	15	311	1.496	11	800	2.084
Kazakhistan	9	452	1.799	9	467	1.986	11	321	2.015	12	317	2.065
Kirghizistan	8	402	1.819	7	409	1.994	9	297	2.032	13	275	1.926
Egypt	34	188	410	29	316	697	21	521	1.217	14	758	1.921
Yemen	25	298	678	19	392	994	17	436	1.380	15	710	1.896
Palestine	17	266	976	16	346	1.238	16	335	1.472	16	528	1.825
Pakistan	12	393	1.127	11	437	1.438	14	333	1.606	17	464	1.822
Libya	18	638	957	10	637	1.668	12	438	1.943	18	395	1.669
Jordan	30	185	507	25	269	730	23	317	1.006	19	610	1.603
Kosovo	10	281	1.237	14	250	1.339	18	211	1.362	20	235	1.373

R – Country Ranking in Table, N – New Registration, T – Total (YÖK, 2015a; YÖK, 2016a; YÖK, 2017a; YÖK, 2018a)

When Turkey's international student body is examined; it is seen that the students coming from the cognate states, neighbouring states and states belonging to the same religion are dominant.

The Turkish compatriots and the number of students with scholarships provided to students coming from countries depends on the relative advantage of the Community state increases significantly by The Great Student Project implemented in 1992 by the Republic of Turkey. With this policy, it is aimed to raise the human resources power needed for the development of the states belonging to related communities, to improve the culture with Turkish language, to raise the Turkish-friendly generations and to strengthen the ties with these countries. (Kavak & Baskan, 2001; Çelik 2008; Kılıçlar, Sarı & Seçilmiş, 2012). When analyzed as of today, the majority of international students in Turkey consists of students from countries in this category.

When examined the neighbouring countries, especially in the last 5 years due to the civil war in Syria Syrians in Turkey is opening the way for studying in Turkish universities has increased significantly and regulations with incentives. In addition, the presence of a significant number of students from neighbouring countries such as Iraq, Iran and Greece are noteworthy. It should be noted that the attending reason distribution of students in neighbouring countries varies from Greek and Bulgarian students. Majority of the students coming into Turkey from these countries constitute Turkish origin students.

Especially as a result of reinforcing foreign policy road map to the states belonging Islamic religion in the last few years, students from Islamic states have an important place in international students for Turkey. Turkey has a very respectable and popular position among the states of Islam due

to historical features, being governed by democracy, taking place in the world's 20 largest economies, and established close ties with western educational institutions.

International Student Selection System in Turkey

Turkey has a two-stage structure for international student selection system, including examination and preference process.
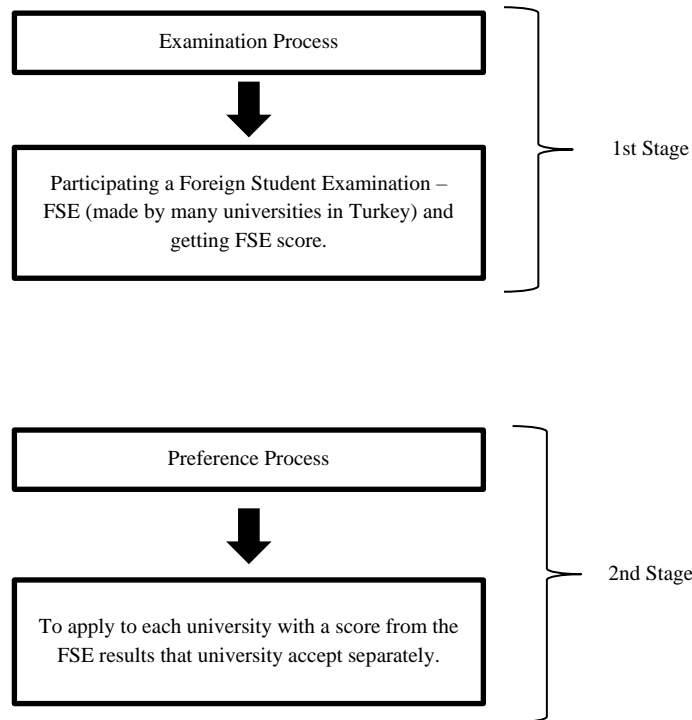
Figure 1. International Student Selection System in Turkey

While a single examination was performed in the first stage for Foreign Nation students made by Measuring-Selection and Placement Center (ÖSYM) until 2010, it was decided to FSE be done separately by each university after the decision taken by Higher Education of the General Assembly in the meeting held on 21.01.2010.

Even though FSE is not a mandatory examination for admission to Turkish Higher Education, but it is preferred because it takes place as the main score in the preference process. Although many important universities in Turkey execute their own FSE, universities accept each other's FSE points. The registration phase of this process is usually carried out in January-April and the examinations are usually completed in April and May. A candidate can take the FSE examination of the institution of his/her own choice. Mathematics and Geometry are the topics of the exam. Each institution is free to prepare its own exam questions, subject to the topic explained by the Council of Higher Education (YÖK).

In the second stage, the Preference Process, each university independently publishes guidelines on which foreign students will be enrolled in which departments. The candidates who have applied for placement in these departments are ranked according to the points based on the score and the selection process is completed with the announcement of the students who are eligible for registration. Universities usually declare one or more additional places for remaining quotas. Each university accepts its own limitation as an application score in the Preference Process. Although many institutions choose to use FSE score, there are universities that choose high school diploma grade or another grade. There is no single application at this point.

The Council of Higher Education (YÖK) annually explains the guidelines and quotas of which university to accept students for which score type. The types of points accepted during the preference process are given in Table 4.

Table 4. Most Accepted at the International Student Placement Rate Type in Turkey

Examination
FSE
ABITUR Exam
French Baccalaureate Diploma
SAT I Exam
GCE AL
ACT (American College Test)
Afghanistan Concurs General State Examination
University placement exam in the People's Republic of China (GAOKAO)
Indonesian Ujian National Exam (UN) or UAN
TAWJIHI Exams
High School Diploma

(YÖK, 2018c)

There are many types of international grade points when the score types are examined, but it is not possible to say that the international score types are accepted by many universities. Generally, in universities that accept these types of grade points are reduced their influence by applying a coefficient to scores. The most accepted type of grade is FES. Apart from FSE, many universities use high school diploma grade. However, to be able to enter prestigious departments, candidates should get a score of 90-100 especially in FSE. Other types of points are generally effective in the use of empty quotas. It is also seen that some universities have only students with a diploma grade/score since there is a validation or calculation difficulty in all types of scores except for the diploma.

METHOD

The research was conducted with qualitative research methods. Qualitative researches aim to reveal the perception and events in a holistic and realistic way by observation, interview and document analysis, such as using data collection methods (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). The research is designed with a case study which is a qualitative research method. In the case studies, it is aimed to investigate the causal linkages of the situations which are very complex to investigate experimentally (Aytaçlı, 2012). Instead of examining a limited number of variables by following certain rules, will be examined a single case or event which reveals why the event occurs in specific way and will be sharpened the details that future research will focus on (Davey, 1991).

Study Group

The study group consists of 5 managers who are responsible for organizing foreign student selection processes of 5 different universities in the Aegean region, Marmara region, Western Black Sea region, East Black Sea region and Eastern Anatolia region. A purpose sampling type of an easily accessible state sampling method was used in the selection of the study group. Since the researcher chooses a sample that is close and easy to access, this method gives the research speed and practicality (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013).

When the total student capacity of 5 institutions which constitute the study group is examined; it is seen that universities provide education services to more than 7 thousand foreign students, more than 7 thousand quotas are available in 2018-2019 academic year, more than 25 thousand students

apply for this quota and 4 institutions that have more than 10 thousand students participated in FSE in 2018. One university in the study group does not take the FSE.

Data collection tool

Interview form and document analysis were used as data collection tool. The interview form was developed by using current foreign student selection processes and field literature analysis. The interview form developed was evaluated by two experts and finalized after requested changes had been made. In addition, document analysis of foreign student statistics of the last years published by official institutions has been examined.

Data Collection

In the process of collecting data, 4 people in the study group used phone call and 1 person used face-to-face interview. The interviews were recorded and then text analysis was made and reported. The statistical reports published by the official institutions were analysed and the data was combined to analyse during research phase and the statistical transformations of the foreign students were investigated.

Data Analysis

In order to analyze the data obtained, content analysis was applied. The purpose of this analysis is to systematically identify the participant's views and to familiarize the researcher with the data and to prepare the data for further analysis. (Altunışık, Coşkun, Bayraktaroğlu & Yıldırım, 2007:269). For this purpose, the problems arising in the interview reports were categorized under common themes, the similarities and differences of the effects they have created in different institutions are examined in depth.

Research Questions

Foreign student selection process consists of two stages in Turkey; exam and placement. Although the research questions were formed in these two stages in particular, common problems of both phases and general problems were examined. According to this research questions are;

1. What are the problems encountered during the examination of foreign students?

2. What are the questions encountered in the process of foreign student placement?

3. What are the general questions encountered in the selection process of foreign students?

RESULTS

1. What are the problems encountered during the examination of foreign students?

Table 5. Theme, category and frequency of problems in the examination process

Theme	Category	Frequency
Organizational problems	Date Conflict	1
	Clarity Problem	2
	Subject area uncertainty	1
	Unexplained exam results	1
	Optical reader problem	2
	Exam language problem	1

Examining the problems encountered during the examination process under the theme of organizational problems; Date Conflict, Clarity Problem, uncertainty of subject area, unexplained exam results and optical reader problem.

2. What are the questions encountered in the process of foreign student placement?

Table 6. Theme, category and frequency of problems in the placement process

Theme	Category	Frequency
Document problems	Fake document	5
	Unconfirmed document	4
	Translation problem	1
Score Type problems	Inability to understand international documents	2
	Distrust of other institutions for FSE	3
Registration problems	Remaining empty quotas	4
	High number of record deletion	4
	Preference limit	3
Special skill	Special skill Exam	2

It is observed that the problems encountered during the placement process are grouped under four themes. Document problems are fake documents, unconfirmed documents and translation problems. Score type problems are, inability to understand international exam systems, documents and distrust of other institutions for FSE. Registration problems are remaining empty quotas, high number of record deletion and preference limits. There is also special skill exam problem.

It is seen that the problems experienced during the placement process consist of more components and the problems stem from the national system problems rather than the institutional deficiencies.

3. What are the general questions encountered in the selection process of foreign students?

Table 7. Theme, category and frequency of general problems

Theme	Category	Frequency
Organizational issues	Operational differences	1
	Lack of cooperation	5
	Lack of staff	3
Structural problems	Central control	2
	Lack of central database	4
	Lack of legislation	4

It is seen that the general problems affecting the whole foreign student selection process are divided into six categories under two themes. Organizational issues are operational differences, lack of cooperation and lack of staff. Structural problems are central control, lack of central database and lack of legislation.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The main problem in the examination process, which is the first stage of the foreign student selection process, is the subject area uncertainty, the problems related to the scope validity and reliability of the examinations. The lack of clear and plain rules in the legislation causes institutions to develop their own solutions. This causes a major problem on the reliability of exams in accountability and transparency.

> *"I have experienced myself that the universities that carry out the FSE are secretive. Some of these processes can be dictated to be a little more transparent, and so these processes can be determined by how other universities can see and decide whether to use that score." G1*

It is observed that the institutions choose secretion of exam questions, the scope validity and the statistical information they made. This causes very strong doubts about the reliability of the exams. The exams made by many institutions are another problem. It is also discussed what these exams vary in content and difficulty should measure. Although the relationship between inter-institutional scores is not known, the student who gets a very high score from the examination of an institution can get a very low grade from the other institution in the same period.

> *"...this is a process that can be influenced by many things, like how the university practicing exam, the question of at least what the psychometric properties of the questions are, or, roughly speaking, the preparation of the scores and the process of any kind, the implementation of it, the very different source of variance. I think it is necessary to try to control a mechanism within FES, at least like an assessment. Currently, universities are a little too autonomous."G1.*

> *"...but we wonder how safe their exam is performed. A test being done in computer environment and we are not supposed to trust this test." G2*

> *"For Let's assume that there is such a university, the student took 100 and the other also 100. How trustful can a test be with so many 100? So, the universities must take it serious." G3*

The fact that the institutions have suspicion for each other's exams and especially the ones considered as the best do not accept a score other than their own exams and the institutions reveal the distrust of each other's exams.

In order to solve this problem; the content of the examinations should be determined more strictly, there should be some statistical validation tools for the exams, and the institutions should be obliged to publish statistical reports explaining the examination processes in detail. Moreover, rather than granting this authority to each university, joint examinations can be organized by coordination at a regional-based university. These universities, which will be authorized to carry out exams, can conduct their examinations in coordination with other universities in their region. This situation will increase the cooperation between institutions and also reduce the energy spent by each institution on its own and will lead to more efficient use of all kinds of resources. Thus, conflicts on the dates of the exam will also be prevented.

> *"FSE does not have to be done from a single center, but certain centers can be at least highlighted" G1.*

> *"Therefore, similar universities should be able to pass this exam with each other. For example; universities in nearby cities may be involved in a common program, including coefficients." G2*

> *"For example, let's assume that we have a union of regional universities. Universities should be able to coordinate between themselves which to make the examination of a university, and which to run the placement of another university." G5*

The use of optical forms in the examination process is another problem area in the examination process. Even though use of optical examination form is a common type of exam for Turkey, students of many countries are not familiar to optical form and have never taken an examination with optical form before. For this reason, it is seen that the students mark the examination booklets and leave the optical form empty and therefore their exams are invalid or the optical form marking process is done by the organizing institution and creates a serious loss of time and effort.

> *"Students do not know the optical coding system. So, it took time for us to explain this situation there. There was an additional workload for our staff. ... therefore, they only mark the booklet. The optic form is empty. So, we have to evaluate it as zero. " G2*

> *"Our exams are multiple choice. But for the students outside of our own country especially in the Arab region, they look at your optic forms like they come from another world. Students don't know optical forms. We're filling out those optical forms. It's too hard." G4*

In order to solve this problem, ÖSYM marking method that puts out a booklet to new practices in the national exam in Turkey is thought to be a solution to this problem experienced in the FSE. It should be noted that this method requires expensive hardware devices in the evaluation process. For this reason, doing examinations in common centers will eliminate the situation of many institutions investing in the same technologies; reduce the costs of preparing questions, exam organization and exam evaluation, will improve the quality of the organization.

In another problem encountered in the exam process is which languages to be used for the exam questions. In order to expand the target audience of the exams, institutions prepare their questions in more than one language and in this case, if the correct translation methods are not used, they bring various problems.

> *"We are having trouble with multilingualism. When you translate the question into Arabic or English, it is quite difficult for us to reach the right man and set the text." G4*

It is not possible for the institutions to translate the questions without any meaning or content shift in the corporate confidentiality by the experts of the field. Related with this problem, in the cooperation between institutions, a pool of questions can be created by examining the questions, according to the difficulty level and the multi-language option and the solutions available in terms of labor, time and cost can be provided.

Apart from these, planning examinations on similar dates as is another organizational problem encountered during the examination process. Again, in this case, it can be overcome by increasing cooperation between institutions and creating common calendars.

Considering the placement process, it is seen that the biggest problem is the problem of counterfeit documents. This problem appears to be due to the lack of a mechanism by which digitally requested documents can be verified during the application. These digitally loaded documents can be easily manipulated with the help of today's information technologies. You cannot be aware of these tricks until the original of the document is requested. The institutions place the students with reference to these digitally uploaded documents and check the accuracy of the documents during registration.

> *"The number of candidates rejected in 2017 is 818 and there are 104 false statements and false documents." G1.*

"Last year, 8 students uploaded false documents. We got these. We even filed a criminal complaint, but the prosecutor's office rejected our application because it was a declaration-based document. This is an irony." G2

"Certainly, this is one of the biggest chronic problems. Fake documents, especially foreign students, so to speak, has become a fashion. Everyone does it. Fake paperwork in the document, fake paperwork on the date of birth, fake paperwork on the score… This needs to be surmounted. Look, this is a very important problem. To prevent this, it should be coordinated by the Higher Education Council." G3

"We confirm the paperwork with primitive methods." G4

"Every year there happens to be 5 or 6, in fact, maybe even at least 10." G5

In case of false documents detected during registration, the applications are considered invalid. However, when it is considered that there are such a large number of false documents, it is not wrong to guess that there may be situations that cannot be determined. As reported in the interviews, it was stated that 104 fake documents were found in 818 documents. Two very important factors that complicate the resolution of document fraud are that not to be able to understand the original language of the documents and / or having no opportunity to verify the documents at the source.

Another problem of the preference process is the high number of registration deletion and the inability to fill the quota.

"2.609 students applied in 2016, and in 2017 1.807 students applied… Our occupancy rate is 31%, 74 of 237 places have been filled in 2016. We reached 20% of our quota in 2017." G1.

"We had about 484 available slots last year. We can fill all 484 in the placement rate. However, a total of 145 applicants were registered in the registration process. As I mentioned, the reason for this is that as the mortars are high or at the same time the student earns several universities and changes their places continuously." G2

"This year we placed 300 students and 50 students were enrolled. Our total quota is close to 400. I mean, in 50 to 400, this is a very low rate." G3

"Our biggest problem now is that the students applying, ie the students who are settling in, do not show up to register. Here the rate is very high, more than half do not show up. For example, in case they can't settle into the section they want, they do not come. He's trying his chance somewhere else. We do not take the student again as a rule." G5

The root source of the problem lies in the lack of disabling the opportunity to make reference to all universities in Turkey. A student can apply to all universities which have foreign student quotas if they wish. The reason for this is that the application system of each university is different and has no information exchange to each other. Even in Turkey, while the Turkish students can choose a limited number of sections in the transition to higher education, there is no limit to the number one choice for foreign students. This situation leads to the fact that a student with a high score will be able to choose several universities at the same time and choose the best among themselves. For this reason, many universities cannot complete the registration process of the student that has been settled. This situation brings with its significant problems. The first is that the quotas remain empty, and the second is the deprivation of other students who can register to that department. Thirdly, even if these students are enrolled in a university, they will be able to cancel the registration because of the existence of a situation where they can always get better.

"In 2017, 52 records have been deleted. So, I guess the rate is 1 to 9." G1.

"There are around 1000 foreign students at our university. ...record deletion rates have increased in the last 3 years. For example, the number of students enrolled last year was between 40 and 50. The most erasure rate was recorded at the end of 2016. Approximately 80 students record have been deleted at the time." G2

"After the registration, and even after completing 1 year, the number of people who change section or university are around 40%." G3

This poses a significant risk to the system and causes the system to become clogged and not to work efficiently. Students having similar chance fill in the list of settlers of different institutions, but since they are able to register in university they cause empty education slots in other instiues and leave the institution when they have a better opportunity. Although they have very important losses in terms of labor, time and cost, these students' system obstructive activities cannot be prevented by any sanctions. However, Turkish college degree students in Turkey are temporarily exposed to sanctions for rights or points.to drop in case of doing something similar. The main reason why these and similar sanctions cannot be made to foreign students is that these abuses cannot be tracked and cannot be limited.

"Any FSE student can apply to 100 universities at the same time and can be settled to each one of them. Therefore, if a student is placed here in the Faculty of Medicine, this student can register another Faculty of Medicine in another university when he is eligible, and this prevents another student who wants to get into his place. Similar cases happen in other universities too." G2

"Foreign students should be prevented from applying to more than one place at the same time. ...student passes exam, for example, eligible for dentistry with very high scores, such as 98 points, really successful students but no one does not apply for placement. I called the students in this process, remember, you were insisting so much, you said you would come. So why did you change placement? Dear teacher, I won the X University and I will attend classes there. Since they apply 10 different universities, then they get to decide on their own." G3

"Maybe student can settle in two places. This is an advantage for the student. But a student should not be placed because he has enough score for anywhere he applies. " G5

There are also significant differences in the scores accepted during the placement process. Although many institutions place their placement with the FSE score, the diploma grades and various international exam scores are also used for placement processes. At this point, the transparency problems of the FSE exam continue in the process of placement and the institutions approach the FSE scores except their own.

"So, I don't know if exam is good enough, it's a complete conundrum or maybe I don't know" G1

The understanding of international examinations, their validation and which of these exams have the validity, or the validity of this exam results another problem area. In all cases where there is no reliable and viable national examination, alternative points and placement will always be on the agenda. Especially the large differences between the institutions in terms of the points that can be accepted in the settlement is another factor that makes the operation of the process difficult. Some universities accept all types of scores by applying various coefficients, some accept students from one point, while others accept students from different types of points at each stage of the process. This situation is also required to be linked to a central rule by legislation.

"We have a problem not understanding national and international examination systems." G1

"Firstly, intrenational exam scores types like SAT, IB, Baccalaureate, ABİTUR accuracy can not be provided by the universities in Turkey. However, if the exam organizers can put verification code in the exam paper, we can verify." G2

"Our biggest problem is not being able to see a diploma grade from Turk originated geography. Student sums, subtractsand comes up with a score. But when we get the diploma, we have to recalculate. In Arabic geography, there are formats that change every year. For example, the diploma format in Saudi Arabia differs almost every year." G4

Another problem area during the placement process is the special skills test. Although some candidates are very successful from special skill examinations, they cannot register to these departments because they cannot meet the FSE score requirement, and highly skilled students have to be eliminated. In this case, it is seen that an arrangement should be made in the admission conditions of the departments with special skill.

"Particularly, we have difficulty in taking students to departments that require a special skill exam. These students take a high score in the BESYO exam and are getting a good section, but candidate can not pass FSE limit so that he cannot get into that section. We are experiencing difficulties in departments that require this type of special skill exam. Exam is composed of two phases, candidates cannot get the exam even if they are successful in the second phase because they fail in first phase." G2

Apart from the main problems in the examination and placement processes that constitute two separate layers of the foreign student selection process, there are a number of general problems affecting all stages of the process. Especially the lack of inter-institutional cooperation is one of these problems.

"Of course, in the sense that the institutions cooperate one-to-one with itself or the cooperation of their institutions by a common center, would be an important advantage." G1

"Not enough cooperation is provided. Universities see this process as a purely commercial competition or are trying to make their own launches." G2

"I think that collaboration between universities is certainly not enough. I think that; the universities should be organized by the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) including a common database, YÖKSİS like, universities should come together and create a delegation in all processes of foreign students, this committee should have a neat administration and a fine organization at the top. I think universities should cooperate on this subject." G3

"Can't be! Either there is a competition among universities, or there are neutral universities that remain indifferent to this process. In fact, there are universities moving away from this process. There are universities that insulate themselves and that are far from this process. Although there are two main reasons for not being able to cooperate, I do not believe that universities work in coordination in this sense." G4

"I don't think there is enough cooperation. Everybody is talking ahead, but I don't think it's a productive collaboration." G5

This situation is the basis of many other problems in both the exam organizations and placement processes. The main problem of placement process problems is also the lack of cooperation like; the lack of trust of each other's exams between institutions, the date conflicts of the examinations, the organizational problems of examinations, the inability to fill the quota, the inability to verify the documents accuracy. At this point, the regional collaborations to be established, the process of jointizing and acting on the regional common systems, both the process of preparing the exams and

the labor that each institution repeats during the placement process, will provide a great savings in time cost and will lead to a more healthy and smooth progress of the process.

> *"For example, we have a union of regional universities. Universities should be able coordinate between themselves and make the examination of a university, and the placement of another university." G5*

Another problem area affecting the whole process is the lack of legislation. In this respect, it is seen that the legislation in the Higher Education Council is in a very general framework, leaving the institutions more autonomous. This situation causes big differences in the implementation process and causes the institutions to carry out the process independently of each other. The same problem brings with the idea of lack of control. According to the current legislation, every institution can make an examination under any conditions. All critical stages are left to institutions; the standards of the examination, the analysis that should be done after the exam, the process of the preparation of the exam, the preparation of the question and the process of exam application. Such unexplained areas cause differences and insecurities among institutions, and a standard at national level cannot be provided. The inadequacy of inter-institutional co-operation results in institutions adopting very different practices. The fact that the legislation allows for a wide variety of practices, the excessively flexible situation makes it difficult for institutions to co-operate in common. A comprehensive legislative effort is required on this subject.

> *"The subject of the exam is given to us. We prepare questions about the subject given at the initiative of our mentors. This means that improvements can be made to the scope validity." G1*

> *"Actually, it is not enough. For example, if the student has dual nationality, we are asked to use the first nationality, but the first nationality is not approved by Governorships or Population Directorates. So we have to stay with the declaration based documents." G2*

> *"Let me give you an example; the students parents work in Germany, but student has graduated from a high school in this city. So, even this person is Turk in reality student had the right to apply for foreign students the examination. This was a great cause of injustice. Because we all know that this is a difficult process for Turkish students to win medical school and dentistry. However, these foreign students were treated like foreign nationals by going through the back door with the gap in the legislation. I can tell you that there are all sorts gaps in legislation in these matters." G3*

> *"There is no legislative provision that restricts us in the placement, but I wish we had." G4*

> *"I think the legislation is not enough. There are problems in terms of legislation. Actually, they're changing rules while the game is on. They are changing the rules with the decision of the Commission." G5*

The selection process of a foreign student is a comprehensive organization that takes approximately 6 months of period. Considering that thousands of students apply, it is obvious that the institutions spend a considerable amount of time on this organization. The insufficiency of the number of personnel involved in this process is an important organizational problem.

> *" The unit has one person actually works in our university and might be the only university that has a personel for this in Turkey. We are one of the three-four most applied universities" G2*

> *"Core staff has 2 people. This number is definitely not enough." G3*

"We are 4 people working on this subject and it is definitely not enough. We are asked to follow other projects while working on this. We're trying to catch up with all of them at the same time. I'm dealing with whole other projects during dealing with placement process. I'm only assigned person on this. Other personnel are Other friends are trying to validate applications. We also have deficiencies on validation too. I try to verify and direct them besides my other responsibilities. While doing these things, we should only spare time for these self-contained works. That would be more efficient." G5

Providing the regional cooperation and division of labor with the institution, each university will be able to make a more efficient organization with less burden in this process. The time spent on this work needs to be understood correctly by the corporate managers.

Autonomous areas in legislation create serious differences in implementation between institutions. These differences cause institutions not to understand each other, to avoid co-operation, and to distrust other institutions. Therefore, the standards of the basic joint practices should be determined and a national consistency should be ensured in the management of both the examination and placement processes.

"The fact that each university adopts a different foreign student recruitment process is the biggest obstacle for us to carry out a healthy process." G3

The differences between these practices and the institutions make different decisions on the processes, create the impression that the process is carried out without supervision. The right of an institution turns into the wrong of the other institution, which leads to the idea that the process is not carried out with seriousness.

"The process of placement and application are not under State or the most serious control." G2

"Our state needs to intervene as a superstructure. Either the student placements will have certain quotas and certain arrangements will be done or if the process will continue in this way it needs to be compiled and organized." G3

The lack of a common system - the database – is shown as the main source of many problems in the process

"More importantly, the fact that YÖK's not creating a common data or pool for foreign student recruitment leaves us in a very difficult position." G3

"I believe that this can only be accomplished through an online verification system that can be installed, and any printed document should be accepted as unreliable." G4

" Creating a data pool, combining programs and receiving application forms prior to placement would be more efficient" G5

The need for a central recording system is essential to solve many problems in the examination and placement process. All relevant institutions with a central recording system to be created for foreign students willing to study in Turkey would be able control themselves which secure the basic data of the students admitted through this system. Students using fake paperwork etc may be banned by means of this system and suspended for a period of a few years. With the enforcement of sanction channels, students may avoid applying for false papers. Likewise, the number of universities or departments to which they can apply within a term can be restricted, enabling more effective use of quota and the placement of more students. Additional rules to be introduced in a number of sanctions or placement procedures to be introduced in case of deletion of records and similar cases will prevent the problem of permanent institution changing. This need is extremely important for the future of the

process and its ability to progress steadily. In this way, this system can be used for the purpose of providing accurate educational policies by directing both demographic and more qualified sub-information of foreign students studying nationwide. As a result of study case on Turkey's foreign students process done by Ozer (2012) draws attention application collection process as one of two basic problems experienced by applicants. One of the most comprehensive analysis about the international students in Turkey is made by Özoğlu, Gür and Coşkun (2012). This analysis also mentions that the application processes are complex and expensive and that a central application system should be established as in the important countries in this field. Although six years have passed, the same problem remains valid today.

> *"If a panel is created such as YÖKSİS and if foreign students are recorded into a common database with unique foreign identification numbers I think a student should only be settled with 5 universities simultaneously in Turkey. Even 5 is too much, 2 or 3 maybe… If the student has settled in the first placement in the quota process, they should not be included in the additional quota. Because they really block the others education rights. This adversely affects the process and makes a tremendous difference in the number of settled and enrolled students.*

> *"… for example, when a person wants to register for our system, I should be able to see which university he/she applied to. Such a platform should be developed first. If a student misrepresents his / her information to a university, it must be blocked at other universities or the same information should be served. First of all, such an improvement in the application process is an improvement especially for universities."* G2

> *"I believe that a common data base, data sharing, especially a common data sharing system to prevent false documents in the registration process, should be carried out with a collective organization."* G3

The greatest gain that countries obtain from their foreign students is not material but political gain. When these students return to their countries of origin at the end of their educational life, they will always try to maintain their commercial and goodwill links with the countries where they are educated when they have important roles or positions in their countries' systems. (Mueller, 2009). This provides a gain that any other investment cannot, in order to keep the political, cultural and economic ties between the countries constant and very strong. For this reason, it is very important in pre-training and education processes as well as in policies and strategies after education. The process should be planned and organized as a whole in order to provide maximum benefit from foreign student investment.

Increasing the number of universities in Turkey can provide more students with educational opportunities. Turkey has to increase the number of international students, in order to attract qualified foreign manpower countries, needs to organize in a highly disciplined and orderly manner in the process. For this purpose, the most important stage in the process, the application and placement process should be planned without any problems. This study examines the current problems of the first stage of the process and possible solutions.

All of the results show that; creating a comprehensive legal arrangements on foreign students in Turkey, increasing controller mechanisms, providing inter-university regional cooperation opportunities and encouraging the mobilization of institutions in this direction, recording and monitoring all processes of foreign students with a central software infrastructure and particularly, it suggests that the pre-training, training process and post-training policies and strategies should be planned in depth.

Increasing number of students, effective foreign policy and a regional power with a flourishing economy, Turkey has become the country of its benefits that international students are required to be a global actor and they must be used and planned in the most efficient way. This

strategy will be created in the right direction will be able to obtain a much stronger place with Turkey on the world stage.

SUGGESTIONS

1. Studies aiming to create practical principles for improving organizational activities of the examination process should be carried out.

2. Regional or central coordination offices and International Student Workshops should be organized at national level in order to increase inter-institutional cooperation opportunities.

3. Work on the necessary infrastructure and software analysis for the centralized common database or common system studies.

4. The International Student Strategy Plan should be developed, and necessary legislative and regulatory / regulatory mechanisms should be established in order to implement this plan in a sound manner.

5. The national policy at the national level of the process and strategies based on goal-oriented core principles are to be correctly defined and required application principles should be developed.

6. The candidate student should be exposed to the student's thoughts about the application process.

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