

Understanding the Internationalization of Turkish Higher Education through Discourse Analysis

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Abstract

This paper explores discourses on and around internationalization as a reflection of the contemporary development of Turkish higher education. It analyses policy documents published by the Council of Higher Education (henceforth the CoHE), academic and media articles over ten years. By examining these texts through a combination of policy framing analysis and (critical) discourse analysis, the study explores how discourses on and around internationalization are framed by policy-makers, academics and media commentators. The study concludes that policy-makers', academics' and media commentators' understanding of internationalization is not solidified into a clear-cut and homogeneous definition and that internationalization is often quantified with references to student and academic numbers. In fact, the discourses on/around internationalization reflect aspects of global trends towards the marketization of higher education and significantly of Turkey's economy policies.

Keywords

internationalization, globalization, Turkish higher education, policy framing analysis, critical discourse analysis

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Introduction

The main theme of this study is the emergence of the internationalization of tertiary education as the new predominant policy discourse in the higher education domain. The internationalization of higher education (henceforth IoHE) is increasingly important to higher education institutions (henceforth HEIs) in Europe and beyond (Hudson, 2016; Knight, 2004).

Altbach et al. (2009) define internationalization as the various policies and programs which HEIs implement in order to respond to globalism.¹ In one of the most widely used definitions of IoHE, Knight (2003, p. 2; 2004) sees internationalization as “the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education”. Although this definition has been helpful in understanding IoHE as a process, its non-prescriptive nature has left it open to interpretation and indeed misinterpretation by HEIs which would like to fit the definition to their own economic rationales, resulting in an over-emphasis on quantifiable outputs. De Wit et al. (2015) revise Knight’s definition by elaborating on the intentionality of the process and prescribing an aim to it: “to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff, and to make a meaningful contribution to society” (p. 29). Today, countries face domestic and international pressure (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Hudson, 2016) to greatly expand their HE systems, and internationalization serves as a magic key to achieve this. Researching the expansion of higher education enrollments over the twentieth century, Schofer and Meyer (2005) conclude that expansion is higher in countries with close links to the international system.

In a similar vein, the expansion of higher education in Turkey is tantamount to the integration of Turkey’s economy to the global market system since the 1980s, which has been described as the “neoliberal transformation” and/or “neoliberalization” of universities in Turkey by HE scholars (Birlir, 2012; İnal & Akkaymak, 2012). With the recent expansion of Turkish HEIs (Günay, 2011; Özoğlu et al., 2016) and increasing numbers of international students (Ergun & Kondakci, 2021; Gök & Gümüş, 2018; Şeremet, 2015) under the incumbent government (the Justice and Development Party-JDP), Turkey’s internationalization policy and the reflections of this policy on university administrations, academics and students are yet to be studied more deeply. The influence of neoliberalism has been visible in all sections of the country’s education system since the 1980s (İnal & Akkaymak 2012) and yet the neoliberal transformation of the higher education, dubbed as “marketization” by Önal (2012) borrowing from Levidow (2002), has peaked since the ascendance of the JDP to power in 2002. In a sense the JDP has been the main culprit of the inevitable, i.e., the neoliberal transformation of the Turkish higher education, and thus has been severely criticized by many pundits both for orienting the education system in line with its neoliberal policies (İnal, 2012) and making it more “Islamic” through its hidden “Islamist agenda” meeting the political-ideological needs of the party (Önal, 2012).

In this paper, by investigating discourses on/around IoHE in Turkey, we aim to reveal how IoHE is conceived and framed in Turkish policy documents, academic

papers and media articles during the JDP rule and how these framings relate to the country's recent political ambitions and socio-cultural dynamics as well as to the global trends in higher education. This paper seeks to understand how Turkish discourses on and around internationalization of higher education have been construed in the official, academic and media texts that have shaped the country's HE policies in the last decade.

Earlier studies of the internationalization of Turkish HE have provided detailed outlines of the status of IoHE and have largely dealt with this topic by attributing success and failure to internationalization particularly with regard to student and staff mobility (see Arkalı Olcay & Nasır, 2016; Çalikoğlu & Arslan, 2018). Even though not all early studies share these characteristics, a substantial majority of them was from the fields of education policy, business and management. One exception stands out as the edited volume entitled "Neoliberal Transformation of Education in Turkey (İnal & Akkaymak, 2012) providing meticulous analyses of neoliberal education policies and reforms in Turkey by various education experts and academics. Notwithstanding the critical perspective of the essays in the volume, the concept of IoHE is explained as synonymous with marketization (Önal, 2012) and/or commodification (Ertürk, 2012) of the education system and the JDP is singled out as the main culprit of the process. Using a specific policy frame approach, this study will try to explicate in detail the meanings and connotations of the concept of IoHE as used in the aforementioned texts. This paper will use data from three distinct fields and analyze these texts via the analytical lenses of sense-making, naming and storytelling. In order to understand how internationalization is made sense of in the Turkish context, and what the problem is represented to be, this paper will also incorporate analytical tools from discourse analysis so as to enable a comprehensive discussion of the results.

Higher Education in Turkey

The historical foundations of modern education in Turkey were laid down in the 17th century, beginning to take shape after their European counterparts since the Tanzimat (Reform) era in the early 19th century (Hanioglu, 2010). Modern Turkey inherited some of these institutions. For instance, the origins of the Istanbul University date back to 1453 (Istanbul, 2016). Having gone through many transformations the institution was called *Darülfünun* (literally meaning the House of Sciences) during the Ottoman period and evolved into İstanbul University in 1933 following the new republic's educational reforms.² Founded under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk the new republic had a limited number of state universities and reaching only nineteen by 1980 (Sargın, 2007). In 1981, the HE system became centralized (in accordance with the new Higher Education Law, number 2547), following the military takeover in 1980 (CoHE, 2019). Since the establishment of the CoHE, the autonomy of universities and the role of an upper entity on universities have been contentious (Günay, 2011). This is mainly because, in our opinion, the CoHE has been instrumentalized by successive governments to hold their grip on the country's education system and youth.

Following a constitutional amendment in the early 1980s, state and non-profit foundation HEIs rapidly increased in number (Birler, 2012). With this increase in the number of HEIs, the proportion of the population with tertiary education also rose. Currently, Turkey has 129 state and 78 non-profit foundation HEIs (CoHE, 2021).

In an earlier study, Efe and Ozer (2015) found that internationalization is a significant and common theme across the various mission and vision statements of Turkish universities. Putting the vague and ostensive nature of mission and vision statements aside, it can be argued that many, if not all, universities in Turkey seek to achieve internationalization. Turkey's EU bid, particularly the Bologna process, plays a crucial role in putting this aim into reality by increasing the likelihood of Turkish graduates continuing their education on the continent (İnal & Akkaymak, 2012). Also the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey collaborates with the EU Framework Programs for internationalization of research funds and the intensification of market-oriented project agendas (Birler, 2012). All in all, internationalization is a significant theme and objective in the strategic plans of the CoHE and all state and foundation universities in Turkey. This paper will try to unravel what discourses on and around IoHE are constructed in Turkish policy documents as well as academic and news articles. In doing so, this paper aims to contribute to the burgeoning literature on the topic by accounting for what internationalization means for Turkish policy makers, academics and media commentators, and what discourse specific features can be gleaned from their reports and articles on the topic.

Developing a Policy Analytic Approach

Developments in educational policies depend critically on the social construction of relevant problems. This study is therefore an attempt to show how discourse analysis and social constructivism can add essential insights to our understanding of educational politics. Drawing on a Foucauldian understanding of discourse, it is intended to expose the institutional dimension of discourse and how specific ways of seeing can be structured or embedded in society while they structure society.

To analyze Turkish discourses on/around internationalization, we collected the pertinent policy documents, academic papers, and media articles (See Appendix A for a complete list of sources included in the analysis). Figure 1 shows the data collection process we followed. While policy documents are the pivotal texts providing the official perspective on the issue, academic and media articles supplement the elite discourse(s) on and around the IoHE in Turkey. In order to manage the analysis, we limited the time span for our data from 2010 to 2020. Using frame analysis, considered to be a type of discourse analysis, we set out to unravel the discursive features of Turkish HE. Discourse analysis is used to understand how and why a particular understanding of a problem of Turkish HE at some point gains dominance and is seen as authoritative, while other understandings are discredited.

The analytical approach used in this research will draw on the concept of frames/framing, which has an established history in policy studies (van Hulst & Yanow,

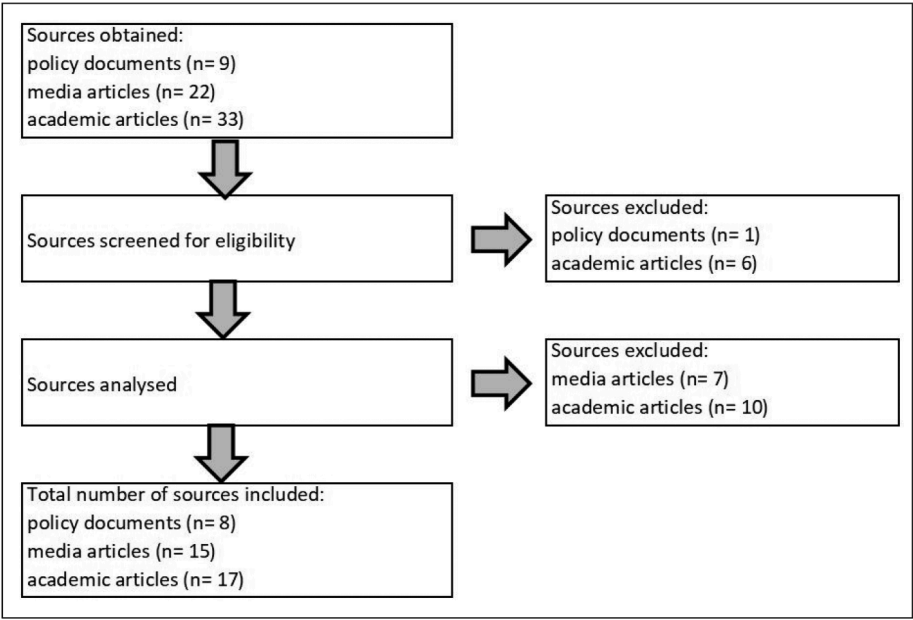


Figure 1. Materials reached by the researchers.

2016). The policy analytic approach used was oriented towards the need to attend to problem definition and was succinctly summed up by Bacchi (2009) who proposed the key analytic question, “What’s the problem represented to be?” in contrast to the “what’s to be done?” approach characteristic of the traditional policy approach. Policy-focused frame analysis following Schön and Rein (1994) therefore focuses on the processes through which a framing of an issue is achieved: (a) highlighting particular features of a situation, (b) ignoring or selecting other features, and (c) binding the highlighted features together into a comprehensible and coherent pattern, namely the processes of naming, selecting and story-telling (Rein & Schön, 1977, 1996; Schön, 1993). These abstract analytical categories were adopted with a slight adaptation to turn them into the concrete steps explained in Table 1.

The analysis will therefore attend to three distinct acts through which frames are constructed. We will then interpret the results focusing on discursive aspects and tools, such as interdiscursive and intertextual references, and the use of pronouns and metaphors. Before presenting the findings, it will be useful to explain our analytical steps in greater detail.

Framing starts with sense making, in Schön’s words (1983): “in order to convert a problematic situation into a problem ... actors must make sense of an uncertain situation that initially makes no sense” (p. 40). With regards to Turkey, when HE policy-makers decide to take a new path in HE provisions, they have to assess what is occurring in this

Table 1. Analytical Processes and the Sources Used.

Analytical categories	Questions to looked for in the analysis	Discursive Manifestations
Sense-making (What)	What is the problem represented to be? What policies and changes will be made?	Definitions, nominalizations, metaphors, nouns, pronouns
Naming, Selecting, Categorizing (Why)	What are the solutions offered to the problem(s)? What are the aims of the policy-making and change?	Argumentation, presuppositions, conjunctions, metaphors
Story-telling (How)	What are the ways/means/methods offered to achieve the stated goals/aims? How will be the problem solved?	Argumentation, speech acts, modalities (the leap from 'is' to 'ought to')

instance, even though they have prior knowledge of earlier policies or have experienced similar disputes before. Thus they construct a model of a world and a model for subsequent action, leading to new framing(s).

The framing process continues with policy actors' attempts to select some aspects of the problem as relevant or important and discarding or ignoring others. Consider the twitter message of the then Head of the CoHE: "Besides contributing to the overseas visibility and strength of our country, internationalization is also an element contributing to the enhancement of quality in our higher education" (translated by the authors). The statement selects from a range of options in developing a new policy for Turkish HE, defines its aims and puts them into a hierarchy of importance. In addition to sense-making and naming, framing also entails story-telling; in Rein and Schön's (1977) words, it "bind(s) together the salient features of the situation ... into a pattern that is coherent and graspable" (p. 239). Stories frame a process, explaining to an audience what has been occurring in policy-related contexts and what needs (not) to be done.

Findings

The findings will be presented respectively for policy documents, academic papers and media articles, followed by a discussion of all the findings and concluding remarks. We will start the analysis by applying the aforementioned analytical framework first to the policy document (henceforth, the "Road Map") written by Çetinsaya (2014), then the head of the CoHE and a group of other policy documents which we believe have laid down the main pillars of the Turkish approach to IoHE.

A Road Map

As the metaphor in the title suggests, the Road Map intended to set a new path for Turkish education, connoting the fact that Turkish HE previously lacked and therefore needed a road map. The term “internationalization” features as a subtitle on the cover page of the Road Map. There is also a section devoted to “internationalization”. Therefore, internationalization features as a significant marker in the sense-making process of the Road Map. The problem is further elaborated with intertextual references to OECD figures, and inter-discursively by drawing on concepts as to internationalization, like the information society and quality assurance.

Yükseköğretimde yaşanan bütün bu dönüşüm süreci, yükseköğretim sistemlerinin giderek artan oranda uluslararasılaşmasına paralel olarak gerçekleşmektedir (Çetinsaya, 2014, p. 28).

The whole process of transformation taking place in higher education goes parallel to the increasing rate of internationalization of the systems of higher education.

As can be seen in this extract, the “whole process of transformation taking place in higher education” is represented as a necessary part of “increasing internationalization.” The problem is highlighted with a nominalized compound term (the “process of transformation”) and an adverbial phrase (“increasing rate”), both of which refer to the temporality of the issue and thus call for action. Indeed, these temporal references prepare for the rationale of internationalization, that is, they answer the question “why are we internationalizing?” Çetinsaya (2014) selectively continues to choose temporal verbs and adjectives in assuming that “internationalization will continue at an increasing speed in the whole world” (p. 29). Also, the OECD (2009) projections regarding the future of higher education, particularly those about student and staff mobility, are chosen to be significant reasons for internationalization.

The temporal metaphor of keeping pace with the modern world and binding together the reasons for IoHE in Turkey has at the same time been an integral part of the Turkish HE system since the foundation of the Republic of Turkey. Efe and Ozer (2015) previously illustrated this point with examples drawn through analyses of mission and vision statements of Turkish HEIs. A significant argument supporting the rationale of internationalization relates to politics, binding the historical background with that of the current politics and status of Turkey. The argument relies on the assumption that higher education has to be supportive of a country’s position in world politics.

Bu manada, bugün dünyada geldiği konum itibarıyla yükseköğretim sistemimizin Türkiye için önemli bir yumuşak güç unsuru haline geldiği ifade edilebilir (Çetinsaya, 2014, p. 169).

In this respect it can be expressed that our education system has become a significant element of soft power for Turkey with regard to the position it has risen to in the world.

Notice that the author uses a high epistemic modality (*haline geldiği* – “has become”) when setting the ground for the role of HE in achieving Turkey’s regional and global ambitions, expressed clearly as in:

Türkiye’nin dünyada siyasi, ekonomik ve sosyo-kültürel etkinliğinin arttığı ve pek çok bölgesel ve küresel sorunların çözümüne katkı sağlamasının beklendiği bir zaman diliminde yükseköğretim kurumlarına da bu çerçevede sorumluluklar düşmektedir. (Çetinsaya, 2014, pp. 168–169)

In a period when Turkey’s political, economic and socio-cultural activities in the world are increasing and Turkey is expected to contribute to the solution of regional and global problems, some responsibilities fall upon HEIs.

The Road Map offers a cyclical answer to how this will be achieved. Internationalization is represented both as “an issue” which needs to be addressed and also as “a strategic field” through which other objectives can be achieved, such as quality in higher education, developing academic resources, and keeping up with the world. Therefore, the “how” question is answered holistically, not as a particular response to internationalization as an issue. Çetinsaya (2014, p. 174) argues that these can be achieved by (i) restructuring the HE system, (ii) developing a new model for the management of HE, (iii) increasing the financial budget for HE, and (iv) redefining the quality processes in Turkey. Since the problem is framed in a particular way, the way forward is addressed from both the structural and economic perspectives.

In 2007, before the Road Map, internationalization was used synonymously with globalization in a strategy document prepared by the CoHE (2007). The document listed globalization as the main reason for the globalization/internationalization of universities (CoHE, 2007, p. 15). The mobility of university students and staff as well as quality assurance are highlighted concepts in this document. A more recent and relevant strategy document was published by the CoHE in 2017, called “The Strategy Document for the Internationalization of Higher Education, 2018–2022”. At the start of the document, the strategic aims of the CoHE are stated as “to help make Turkey become the center of attraction for higher education” and “to increase the institutional capacity for internationalization” (CoHE, 2017, p. 2). The document also provides a generic definition of internationalization:

Yükseköğretimde uluslararasılaşma, başta öğrenci ve akademisyen hareketliliği olmak üzere yükseköğretim alanına giren tüm uluslararası faaliyet ve işbirliklerini kapsamaktadır. (CoHE, 2017, p. 7)

Internationalization in higher education includes all international activities and cooperation within the ambits of higher education, primarily student and staff mobility.

As seen in this extract, mobility features as the main thrust of the CoHE's strategic plans for internationalization. This is in line with the expressed rationale of internationalization in the document, based on the belief that it will enhance countries academically, economically, socially and culturally (CoHE, 2017, p. 3). With intertextual references to the 10th Development Plan of the State, the strategy documents unequivocally underline the contribution of internationalization to Turkey's political, that is soft, power. The means of internationalizing Turkish universities are also listed clearly, including increases to the number of international students and staff, elevating more Turkish universities to the top 500 global universities, focusing on specific regions and countries, increasing international collaborations, and sending more postgraduate Turkish students abroad and then employing them in Turkish universities, all of which seem to have focused directly on numbers. Overall, from the 2007 strategy document to the Road Map and the subsequent policy documents, the story of the IoHE in Turkey has been framed in a particular way, reflecting the state-centered approach to internationalization, enunciating the significance of mobility numbers and the performance of universities, both economically and academically.

Academic Articles

In total, we analyzed 17 academic papers mainly from the fields of education and management in order to understand how internationalization is made sense of by Turkish academics and whether there are any parallels in their definitions and understandings of IoHE with the aforementioned policy choices and directions. To fulfill this aim and for reasons of brevity here, we only present some of the most significant examples of sense making we gleaned from our analyses of academic papers.

One of the common threads which binds all of the academic articles together is the acknowledgment that the internationalization of HE has become a burgeoning interdisciplinary field of research in Turkey. Academics make sense of the issue not purely from their own field of research but call for collaboration between relevant fields. Even so, there are differences as well. Academics with an education background focus on the qualitative aspects of the problem, whereas those from the management sciences assess the level of internationalization quantitatively. We have not come across a genuine definition, apart from quotations from the most commonly used ones, of the term "internationalization" in any of the articles. There are, however, references to internationalization as a means, a process and a strategy for reforming Turkish HE.

Yükseköğretim reformlarının bir gerekçesi ya da aracı olarak sıklıkla dile getirilen kavramların başında "uluslararasılaşma" gelmektedir. (Vural-Yılmaz, 2013, p. 172)

Internationalization is often said to be one of the first concepts for the rationale and means to bring about reforms of higher education.

[...] uluslararasılaşma, Türkiye Yükseköğretimi'nde hem devlet hem de üniversiteler bazında politik, akademik, sosyo-kültürel ve ekonomik gerekçelerle ele alınan çok boyutlu bir stratejik araç olarak görülmeye başlanmıştır. (Çalıkoğlu & Arslan, 2018, p. 217)

Internationalization is now being regarded as a multi-dimensional strategic instrument which is addressed with academic, socio-cultural and economic reasons at both the state and the university level of Turkish HE.

Acknowledging the fact that internationalization is an essential component of the Turkish HE system, Turkish academics refer directly and/or indirectly to the same rationale for internationalization as expressed in the policy documents. That is, the rationale of internationalization is represented to be connected with external forces, i.e., globalization, the changing conditions and increasing market demands. Resonating with the policy documents, such uncritical observations fall in the same cyclical rationale as in the following extract:

The internationalization of higher education originated and gained speed because of actual needs that were the results of globalization. (Aba, 2013, p. 107)

Similarly, academics also make choices with regard to answering why we (should) internationalize. They also relate the issue of internationalization to the discourse of Turkey's growing importance in the region, similar to the framing of the issue in policy documents. Thus the internationalization of HE is represented as being a requisite for the process of globalization and in extending Turkey's economic and political power and its cultural influence in the region and beyond.

Türkiye'nin bölgesinde ve dünyada önemli bir aktör olarak önüne koyduğu büyük hedefler birlikte değerlendirildiğinde yükseköğretim alanında da dünyadaki en önemli merkezlerden birisi olmaktan başka bir çıkış bulunmamaktadır. (Özer, 2017)

When the ambitious goals which Turkey set in its region and worldwide are taken into account, there is left no other choice but to become a leading center in the field of higher education.

1990'lı yılların başında SB'nin dağılmasıyla birlikte, bölgede bulunan Türk devlet ve akraba toplulukları ile değişim programları ve ortak üniversite kurma çabaları, uluslararasılaşmada daha çok politik ve kültürel işbirliği amacını ön plana çıkarmıştır. (Çalıkoğlu & Arslan, 2018)

With the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, exchange programs and efforts to establish a joint university with the Turkic states and communities in the region have brought political and cultural cooperation more into the spotlight.

The former extract above situates and frames internationalization in the context of Turkey's current political agenda, particularly as a "no other choice" matter, whereas the second extract links it to Turkey's foreign policy extension to Turkic countries in the 1990s under the leadership of Turgut Özal, then the president of Turkey, thus with the neoliberal policies of the time. Additionally, Bostrom (2010) also alludes to Turkey's EU bid, acknowledging the fact that internationalization involves "Europeanization, Westernization, and harmonization" as significant variants (p. 144).

Besides these external forces, Turkish academic discourses on/around IoHE also revolve around internal forces. As such, increasing the academic quality of universities and meeting the international standards are some of the most frequently mentioned rationale for internationalization. As a positive finding, the top-down approach to internationalization at times is criticized by Turkish academics.

Öte yandan uluslararasılaşmanın asli aktörleri olan üniversiteler sürece daha etkin bir şekilde dâhil edilmelidir. (Vural-Yılmaz, 2016a, p. 107)

On the other hand, universities, which are the main actors of internationalization, should be made a part of the process effectively.

Uluslararasılaşma mevcut olan merkezi ve bürokratik yapı nedeniyle her üniversitenin kendi stratejisini üretmek yerine Yükseköğretim Kurulu tarafından belirlenen bir yön gösterme eğiliminde ortaya çıkmaktadır. (Şeremet, 2015, p. 28)

Due to the dominance of the current central and bureaucratic structure, internationalization shows itself not in a way where universities develop their own [internationalization] strategies, but as a direction determined by the Council of Higher Education.

Shown in the above extracts, "universities" are represented as the main actors of the process of IoHE. Such metonymical references relate to a significant criticism of the Turkish higher education system and to demands that Turkish universities be granted more autonomy and decisive position in the policy making process including that of internationalization. Therefore, the reformation of the HE system, particularly in line with those of western countries, is construed by Turkish academics as a vital aspect of IoHE in Turkey. Internationalization therefore becomes both "the rationale and the catalyst" of the reforms in higher education (Vural-Yılmaz, 2016b). Despite this criticism, metonymic references also reveal that the state and its public policies with regard to HE are considered the pivotal actors that will spearhead the reformation process and thereby boost the internationalization of Turkish universities.

Media Articles

Twenty-two “media articles” published on the websites of national newspapers written mostly by academics included interviews with university rectors. Therefore, some of the articles reflected the opinions of HE administrators and not those of independent journalists. The analysis of media articles revealed that the problem was defined in a similar way, with internationalization being seen as a necessary, indeed inevitable, process to keep up with the changing conditions across the world, in other words, globalization. There are frequent intertextual references to the Road Map as well as other pertinent policy documents. There is also a significant difference between the way in which foundation university rectors and state university rectors represent this issue. Members of the former group refer to the increasing need for skilled labor and competitiveness as the rationale of IoHE, whereas the latter emphasize the importance of universities in contributing to Turkey’s policy agenda and soft power.

Common in all of the selected media articles, however, is the fact that internationalization is construed as a process which will help the country keep up with the world. This is vaguely expressed in the following extract by one columnist, the head of the International Council for Universities, as early as 2012:

Sınırları devletler tarafından çizilmiş ülkeler yerine, sınırları değerlerle ve kavramlarla çizilmiş ülkelerden oluşan yeni bir dünya için, uluslararasılaşmada amacımız [...] (Azizoglu, 2012a, p. 1)

For a new world whose borders are not drawn by states but by values and concepts, our aim is to internationalize [...]

This also resonates with the criticism of globalization that the whole world is becoming a global village. In another column by the same author entitled “The Internationalization or Globalization of Education”, globalization is considered to be both a challenge and an opportunity (Azizoglu, 2012b). The writer believes that globalization can be tamed to accommodate man’s needs and the cultural saving of human beings and that only in this way can the monopolization of a hegemonic world order be avoided (2012b); according to the writer, this can be achieved through education which prioritizes values. It should be noted that the focus on values is in line with Turkey’s changing foreign policy paradigm initiated by the country’s then foreign minister, Ahmet Davutoğlu,³

Internationalization is also seen as a means to increase the competitive capacity of Turkish universities not directly in academic terms but in economic terms by attracting more students, as the next extract shows:

Yabancı öğrenciler, geçtiğimiz yıllara oranla her yıl daha fazla Türk üniversitelerine ilgi gösteriyor [...] Küresel eğilimler itibariyle nüfustaki yükseköğretim mezunu oranını artırmak rekabet açısından çok önemli. (Okan, 2014, p. 2)

Foreign students are showing more interest in Turkish universities in comparison to previous years [...] Because of global trends, it is important to increase the number of graduates to keep up with global competition.

The reasons for internationalizing Turkish universities also include references to the importance of their contribution to Turkey's growing power in the region, as argued by a columnist from the *Akşam*, Kılanç (2014), who believes that "it is hard to compete with US and European universities; however, countries to the south and east of Turkey present an opportunity with families wishing to send their children for higher education in Turkey".

As for the ways suggested for achieving internationalization, there are frequent intertextual references to the Road Map. There is a focus on increasing the competitiveness of universities and the numbers of international students and academics, on reforming the HE system overall and on establishing a quality assessment measurement structure, all of which are some of the common themes. The adoption of the internationalization of universities country-wide and boosting the international accreditation of universities are also seen as necessary steps. Media articles have framed IoHE in Turkey mainly from the perspective of policy-makers and university administrators, substantiating the claim that media articles are part of an elite discourse (van Dijk, 1993); that is, they are created and produced by the elite, in this case policy-makers and university administrators.

Discussion and Conclusion

One of the most important findings that can be gleaned from this research is that the means of internationalizing Turkish universities are prescribed unequivocally with references to increasing the numbers of international students and academic staff, getting more Turkish universities in the top 500 universities in global rankings, supporting international research collaboration, and sending more postgraduate Turkish students abroad and subsequently employing them in Turkish universities, all of which seem to be focused directly on quantifiable outcomes. Internationalization is also seen as a means to increase the competitive capacity of HEIs, not directly in academic terms but in economic and competitiveness terms. While this is in line with the neoliberal economic policies of the country since the 1980s, the last decade has witnessed an upsurge in commodification and worsening quality of state and foundation universities.

A common denominator across all texts relates to the century-old, or even older, ambition of modern Turkey. Internationalization is seen as a means of keeping up with the world, particularly the developed world, which is the West. Despite the

recent deterioration of EU-Turkey relations, Turkey's accession to the EU will continue to mark the country's educational policies, particularly with regard to its competitiveness vis-à-vis European universities. More to the point, 3.7 million Syrians and their children that took refuge in Turkey after the outbreak of the Syrian civil war in 2011 will be a significant topic and decisive factor not only in negotiations with EU countries over the refugee crisis but also in overhauling the Turkish higher education. The number of Syrian students at Turkish state universities was slightly over 73 thousand until 2020.⁴ This number is likely to increase rapidly in the upcoming years with more than one million school-aged Syrian refugee children in Turkey.⁵ While creating a tension among refugees and local people on accounts that they are accepted to universities with less effort, Syrian refugee students increase the rate of international students in Turkish universities, and thanks to the urgency of the situation most universities have had to revise and improve their enrolment systems for international students.

Another significant finding is that the policy documents repeatedly underscored the contribution of internationalization to Turkey's soft political power. In this respect, internationalization is related to the discourse of Turkey's growing importance in the region. Frequent references are made to the significant role which universities play in attracting foreign students and academics to Turkish universities. In this way, the internationalization of the country's HE system is pivotal in extending Turkey's economic and political power and its cultural influence on the region and beyond. Increasing the international accreditation of Turkish universities is also seen as a vital step towards internationalization.

Internationalization in Turkish policy documents and to an extent in academic and media articles, seems to denote a process and a strategy for reforming the Turkish HE. Notwithstanding this conspicuous target, no broad consensus seems to exist over a clear and genuine definition of internationalization in any of the policy texts or academic papers. Nonetheless, there does seem to be a broad consensus over the role of globalization, which is, along with increasing market demands, represented uncritically as a cogent reason for IoHE.

In conclusion, three suggestions can be made from the findings presented in this paper. First, there is an overriding need for other voices to be heard in internationalization policies. Rather than consolidating the central power, the CoHE policy-makers need to incorporate the voices of administrators, academics, students and other relevant parties into Turkish HE policy. Second, the widespread discourse on internationalization and globalization is, in most cases, restricted to the admission of international students, but there is no mention of the internationalization of the curriculum. What seems to be missing in the internationalization process of a typical HEI is a holistic approach in which all the stakeholders in the Turkish universities work in harmony to make quality matter. Finally, aligning Turkey's HE strategy with regard to quality assurance, for which a new board has recently been established, particularly in line with the leading western HEIs, is seen as essential. IoHE, which is an abstract aim in policy and strategy documents, needs to be defined prescriptively, and when

this has been done, the emphasis needs to be put on the academic as well as economic benefits of internationalization rather than on other priorities of importance for staff and students.

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Supplemental material

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

Notes

1. The concept of internationalization is often confused with globalization and at times with globalism, for a thorough discussion of the terms please see Altbach and Knight (2007); Brandenburg and de Wit (2011).
2. For further information on the history of Turkish HE see “Higher Education System in Turkey” (CoHE, 2014).
3. See for example a report published by Ahmet Davutoğlu, then the Foreign Minister of Turkey, http://sam.gov.tr/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/vision_paper_TFP2.pdf retrieved on 13.12.2019
4. Retrieved from <https://multeciler.org.tr/turkiyedeki-suriyeli-sayisi/> on 09.09.2021.
5. Retrieved from <https://www.unicef.org/turkey/en/press-releases/65000-refugee-children-benefit-school-enrolment-programme-turkey> on 09.09.2021

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