

Remarks on Turkish Public Institutions Engaged in the Internationalization of Higher Education (IoHE)

Yükseköğretimin Uluslararasılaşması (IoHE) Alanında Faaliyet Gösteren Türk Kamu Kurumlarına İlişkin Değerlendirmeler

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Abstract

Using document analysis, this study aims to examine the role and contributions of Turkish public institutions in the internationalization of higher education (IoHE) using the framework of neo-institutionalization theory. Within the scope of the research, 20 policy documents prepared by decision-making bodies such as the Turkish Presidency, ministries, CoHE, and public foundations in Türkiye were analyzed through content analysis. This study illuminates the intricate network of actors shaping the Internationalization of Higher Education (IoHE) landscape in Türkiye, with CoHE, universities, ministries, and public foundations collaborating closely. Through the neo-institutionalization lens, CoHE emerges as the linchpin, steering Türkiye's universities towards global integration, embodying the coercive isomorphism emphasized by the theory. Moreover, a spectrum of key institutions, including MoNE, the Ministry of Science, Industry, and Technology, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Interior, the YEE, and the TMF, play pivotal roles in Türkiye's IoHE landscape. The motivations of these entities, viewed through mimetic and normative isomorphism, blend to shape Türkiye's higher education internationalization efforts, as outlined by neo-institutionalization theory. Furthermore, the study underscores the rising significance of public foundations alongside traditional institutions in the IoHE realm. Notably, local institutions are adopting global behaviours, reflecting the mimicking pressures within Türkiye's higher education. However, despite Türkiye's substantial progress in higher education internationalization, a crucial gap emerges: the lack of a comprehensive roadmap defining the roles of all stakeholders. This gap, echoing the uncertainties of neo-institutionalization theory, underscores the need for a unified vision among Türkiye's diverse IoHE stakeholders.

Keywords: Internationalization, Internationalization of Higher Education, Governance of Internationalization, Turkish Public Institutions, Neo-institutionalization Theory.

Özet

Bu çalışma, doküman analizi yöntemini kullanarak, Türkiye'deki kamu kurumlarının yükseköğretimin uluslararasılaşmasındaki rolünü ve katkılarını yeni-kurumsallaşma teorisi çerçevesinde incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Araştırma kapsamında, Türkiye'de Cumhurbaşkanlığı, bakanlıklar, YÖK ve kamu vakıfları gibi karar alma organları tarafından hazırlanan 20 politika belgesi içerik analizi yoluyla incelenmiştir. Bu çalışma, YÖK, üniversiteler, bakanlıklar ve kamu vakıflarının yakın işbirliği içinde olduğu Türkiye'de Yükseköğretimin Uluslararasılaştırılması ortamını şekillendiren karmaşık aktörler ağına ışık tutmaktadır. Yeni kurumsallaşma merceğinden bakıldığında, YÖK, Türkiye'deki üniversiteleri küresel entegrasyona yönlendiren ve teorinin vurguladığı zorlayıcı izomorfizmi somutlaştıran temel dayanak noktası olarak ortaya çıkmaktadır. Ayrıca, MEB, Bilim, Sanayi ve Teknoloji Bakanlığı, Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, Dışişleri Bakanlığı, İçişleri Bakanlığı, YEE ve TMV gibi bir dizi kilit kurum, Türkiye'nin YÖK manzarasında önemli roller oynamaktadır. Bu kurumların motivasyonları, taklitçi ve normatif izomorfizm aracılığıyla incelendiğinde, yeni-kurumsallaşma teorisinin ana hatlarıyla belirttiği gibi, Türkiye'nin yükseköğretimde uluslararasılaşma çabalarını şekillendirmek için harmanlanmaktadır. Çalışma ayrıca, geleneksel kurumların yanı sıra kamu vakıflarının da YÖK alanında artan öneminin altını çizmektedir. Özellikle, yerel kurumlar, Türkiye'nin yükseköğretimdeki taklitçi baskıları yansıtacak şekilde küresel davranışları benimsemektedir. Ancak, Türkiye'nin yükseköğretimin uluslararasılaşmasında kaydettiği önemli ilerlemeye rağmen, önemli bir boşluk ortaya çıkmaktadır: tüm paydaşların rollerini tanımlayan kapsamlı bir yol haritasının eksikliği. Yeni kurumsallaşma teorisinin belirsizliklerini yansıtan bu boşluk, Türkiye'nin farklı YÖK paydaşları arasında ortak bir vizyona duyulan ihtiyacın altını çizmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Uluslararasılaşma, Yükseköğretimin Uluslararasılaşması, Uluslararasılaşmanın Yönetimi, Türk Kamu Kurumları, Yeni-kurumsallaşma Teorisi.

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Higher education is widely acknowledged as a significant driver of both economic and scientific development. This is because it equips students with the competencies and information that are essential for fostering creativity and advancing technological progress. In addition, research is conducted at higher education institutions, which results in new findings and developments in a variety of sectors. Higher education also helps socio-political advancement since it educates people who go on to become leaders in government, industry, and civil society. Additionally, it does so by encouraging critical thinking and civic participation among its students. Higher education also helps to foster intercultural communication and awareness by bringing together students from a variety of backgrounds for learning and working together, which ultimately results in a greater capacity for understanding and appreciating the world's many cultures. Higher education has an international framework in terms of economic, scientific, social, and cultural factors. One of the potential outcomes of internationalization is a greater understanding of the various cultures that exist around the world because students and faculty are exposed to various cultures and ways of thinking through their interactions with international students and their experiences studying abroad. In this sense, internationalization is a useful tool for fostering intercultural understanding and communication via the sharing of other nations' and cultures' cultural traditions. In this regard, the internationalization of higher education (IoHE) strengthens universities' already international structures and understandings. For these purposes, states and governments take various steps and make efforts through universities. The literature (Aydınlı & Mathews, 2020; Bulut-Şahin & Brooks, 2023; Bulut-Şahin & Eriçok, 2023; Bulut-Şahin & Kondakçı, 2022; Efe & Özer, 2022; Yemini & Sagie, 2016) shows that the internationalization of higher education, both in its practical implementation and as a subject of scholarly inquiry, has experienced significant growth over the past few decades.

Over time, IoHE started to be approached from a strategic perspective and key stakeholders of higher education institutions needed to be involved in the process (Bulut-Şahin et al., 2023) because a dedication to internationalization entails a meticulously planned strategic process that carefully considers the comprehensive development of the entire system (Hunter, 2018). Perez-Encinas (2018) asserts that collaborative coordination among support services within higher education institutions can bolster their internationalization strategy through (1) identifying internationalization requirements, objectives, and focal points; (2) integrating relevant activities and support services into their strategic blueprints; (3) incorporating the perspectives of all stakeholders within higher education institutions across all initiatives and endeavours to foster a more inclusive and supportive educational milieu; (4) periodically evaluating the internationalization plan in conjunction with stakeholders' viewpoints. Hudzik

(2011) modelled this perspective as a comprehensive internationalization model. Horta (2010) confirms that public institutions play a vital role in the internationalization of institutions by supporting the development of institutional knowledge capacity and recognizing academic endeavours that are globally focused. Based on these perspectives, this study aims to examine the internationalization motivation of Turkish higher education from an institutional perspective. For this purpose, this study examines the role and contributions of Turkish public institutions in the IoHE process through neo-institutionalization theory. The main reason for choosing this theory is to understand how Turkish public institutions act in the face of external factors in the internationalization process and to analyze how these institutions position themselves in the global education field.

Theoretical Framework

Neo-Institutionalization Theory

This study is grounded in neo-institutionalization theory, which offers valuable insights into how institutions, particularly in higher education, adapt to external factors. Neo-institutionalization theory argues that institutions such as universities and government bodies are influenced by forces that compel them to adopt certain structures, policies, and practices to gain legitimacy and conform to prevailing norms in the global higher education landscape. According to Meyer and Rowan (2006), the perspective of neo-institutionalism regards human-created regulations and processes as the fundamental elements of institutions. According to this viewpoint, institutions acquire a separate and distinct existence by being socially constructed in the collective understanding of individuals who are involved with them. In neo-institutionalism, the focus lies on how individuals actively create significance within institutionalized environments using language and various forms of symbolic representations. On the other hand, organizations resemble their environment in three ways: coercive, mimetic and normative isomorphism. Coercive isomorphism encompasses the formal and informal pressures placed on organizations by external entities upon which they rely, as well as the societal expectations within which these organizations operate. However, not all forms of institutional conformity arise solely from coercive influences. Uncertainty also plays a significant role in prompting organizations to mimic others, a phenomenon known as mimetic isomorphism. Another source of organizational change toward similarity comes from normative pressures, particularly those related to professional standards and practices (Di Maggio & Powell, 1983). Within the framework of neo-institutionalization theory, we consider the three main forms of isomorphism that shape organizational behaviour: coercive, mimetic, and normative. These forces are exemplified in Türkiye's strategic focus on African countries within its internationalization agenda. Over the past two decades, Türkiye has increasingly engaged with Africa through



education diplomacy, leading to a significant rise in African students in Turkish universities. This reflects coercive isomorphism, where institutions like CoHE align their strategies with state-directed foreign policy priorities, and mimetic isomorphism, as Türkiye adopts successful global practices in regional targeting to enhance its soft power and global integration. These forces drive institutions to adopt international practices, form partnerships with foreign counterparts, and develop strategies that align with international trends in higher education. Applying neo-institutionalization theory to the internationalization of higher education in Türkiye allows us to examine how Turkish public institutions navigate these external pressures. By analyzing the strategies and actions of these institutions through the lens of neo-institutionalization, we gain insights into how they seek to establish themselves within the global education landscape.

Internationalization of Higher Education

Higher education institutions all across the globe are making great strides toward becoming more internationally focused. IoHE requires universities to cooperate with international students, researchers, and academics; offer international programs and courses; and organize international student exchange programs. This allows students to meet different cultures and ideas, learn languages, and explore career opportunities. In addition, it provides access to international relations and information necessary for universities to compete in the globalizing world. De Wit (2015) states that there have always been global aspects to university, whether in the classroom or community service, but they have often been more haphazard, piecemeal, and implicit than systematic and overarching. There was a need for a more deliberate approach to internationalization in higher education in the final decade of the last century due to the rising globalization and regionalization of economies and societies, the demands of the information economy, and the end of the Cold War. It is important to add that globalization and internationalization are closely related concepts but should not be confused with one another. The setting of economic and scholarly developments that are an integral element of the experience of living in the 21st century is globalization. The term “internationalization” refers to the policies and procedures that are implemented by academic systems and organizations, as well as by people, to successfully navigate the global academic environment (Altbach & Knight, 2007). It can be said that the internationalization of higher education (IoHE) is not a new concept (Gao et al., 2015) but it represents a wide-ranging and diverse phenomenon, shaped by a dynamic interplay of political, economic, socio-cultural, and academic factors and actors (De Wit, 2019).

The landscape of higher education is shifting all around the globe as a result of the interaction of globalization, technological advancement, and demographic shifts (Prats-

Monné, 2017). The internationalization of society has been fuelled by traditional activities and principles, including collaboration and trade, peace and understanding among nations, the growth of human capital, and solidarity. It is challenging to assert that these practices do not still take place. However, the reality is that in the race for market share, profits, and reputation/branding, internationalization has been pushed to the margins (De Wit, 2015). A new stage of internationalization has begun. Universities and other institutions are now embracing qualified migration and revenue-generating strategies in the context of global student mobility. The skilled migration strategy enables universities to expand their knowledge-gathering and research capacity by drawing in quality students, and the revenue generation strategy enables universities and institutions to raise enough money from overseas students to ensure their existence. In the contemporary environment, which is characterized by comparison and competition rather than collaboration, institutional governance has undergone a significant transformation. As a result, while establishing curricula, institutional management primarily adheres to market principles (Wadhwa, 2016). Globalization and the IoHE assist in attracting talented individuals, raising the economically and scientifically stable potential of a particular nation, and improving the workforce, all of which contribute to economic development that is sustainable (Strielkowski et al., 2021). For a variety of reasons, universities are becoming more globally minded. One of them is to get students from other countries to enrol. The second is to use the cross-border deployment of their programs. The third is to prioritize academic initiatives that will have a positive impact on the global community (Mitchell & Nielsen, 2012). As a direct consequence of this, internationalization is seeing fast expansion in higher education institutions all over the globe (Buckner, 2019). It should be noted that it is not possible to consider Türkiye outside of this trend. Today, Türkiye has become one of the hubs where international students come from many parts of the world.

Turkish Higher Education Context

IoHE in Türkiye dates back to the Ottoman period with the motivation of modernization (Göver, 2015). The establishment of the Council of Higher Education in 1982 and Türkiye’s inclusion in the Bologna Process in 2000 can be considered as important thresholds. According to Aydınli & Mathews (2020), the Turkish Higher Education Council (CoHE) serves as the key governmental body responsible for developing and coordinating the implementation of major directives and strategies concerning Turkish higher education. The importance of determining Türkiye’s higher education strategy has been underlined in the reports prepared by CoHE. That higher education in Türkiye has grown substantially in recent years. And the current system is expected to grow even more quantitatively. As a result, the internationalization of higher education has been adopted as a top priority (Çetinsaya, 2014).

Vural-Yılmaz (2016) examined the internationalization of higher education in Türkiye in six periods. These periods are presented in Table 1 as Tanzimat-the first years of the republic, 1950s, 1970s-1980s, 1990s, 2000s, 2010s and 2020s:

As can be seen in Table 1, the focus of internationalization in the 2010s has taken on a more comprehensive structure, national strategies have been determined, new institutions have emerged, and legal regulations have been made. In this context, CoHE (2017a) prepared a strategy document that will guide the policies and strategies implemented and to be implemented in the internationalization of the Turkish higher education system and higher education institutions. It is emphasized that this document was prepared in the light of the 10th Development Plan, Government Programs and other top documents. With this document, which comprehensively addresses the internationalization process, the strategic goals of “ensuring that Türkiye becomes a center of attraction in the field of higher education” and “increasing institutional capacity in internationalization”

have been adopted. In addition, Türkiye Scholarships have made significant contributions to international student mobility. In 2020, a total of 3,680 students received long and short-term scholarships (Türkiye Scholarships Report, 2020). Türkiye currently hosts more than 300,000 international students from 198 countries with 208 universities, 129 of which are public and 79 foundation (CoHE, 2022).

The fact that internationalization has gained such steam in the world and Türkiye has led to an increase in the number of institutions that contribute to internationalization. While universities have historically been at the focal point of internationalization, the efforts and support of other public institutions are also beneficial for internationalization. Our main motivation for conducting this study is to identify the efforts and support of other public institutions for internationalization in a country like Türkiye where higher education is largely public and centrally managed. This research is aligned with neo-institutional theory, which suggests that institutions adopt certain structures and

Table 1. History of internationalization of higher education in Türkiye (Vural-Yılmaz, 2016)

Period		Characteristics of the Period
First Period	Tanzimat-First years of the Republic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Western-style schools are opened. International dimension in higher education is accepted as a means of modernization. • Turkish academics studying abroad and international academics shape higher education. • Model transfer from Europe.
Second Period	1950s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Türkiye becomes a member of NATO. • Rapprochement with the USA occurs. • The orientation towards the American system in higher education begins. • METU is founded. • Model transfer from the USA.
Third Period	1970s-1980s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With the military coups, higher education became more nationalist, centralized, hierarchical and introverted. • After the 1971 memorandum and the 1980 coup, higher education is charged with the responsibility of "serving national and spiritual values". • Higher education becomes introverted.w
Fourth Period	1990s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new internationalization agenda emerges in higher education. • Steps are taken towards the newly independent Turkic Republics and a diplomacy-oriented perspective is adopted. • Higher education is used as soft power. • A period of diplomatic-oriented internationalization is adopted.
Fifth Period	2000s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With the EU full membership and Bologna Process membership, Turkish higher education turns its direction back to Europe and internationalization efforts gain momentum. • As a result of inclusion in the Erasmus Program, student and faculty exchange with European universities begins. • International agreements and mobility increase.
Sixth Period	2010s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A more comprehensive vision of internationalization, including the Bologna Process, emerges. • National strategies for Internationalization in Higher Education are created. • New organizations come into play. • Legal arrangements are made. • Diplomatic and economic targets are set. • There is an evolution from being a sending country to being an actor in economic and political dimensions.



behaviors to fit into prevailing norms and expectations. We expect that this research will add value to the academic literature by uncovering the initiatives of diverse public institutions, each driven by its own distinct motivations, within a centralized higher education system. For this purpose, we aimed to portray the current landscape of Turkish motivation for internationalization.

Method

This study employs document analysis, a qualitative research method that allows for an in-depth examination of materials relevant to the research focus (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). The purpose of this analysis is to uncover the role of Turkish public institutions in the internationalization of Turkish higher education, guided by the principles of neo-institutional theory. Document analysis is particularly suitable for examining policy documents and similar sources (Merriam, 2018; Patton, 2015), making it an effective method for addressing the research objectives.

Data Collection and Analysis

In line with neo-institutional theory, this study aims to examine the contributions of Turkish public institutions to the internationalization of Turkish higher education. To achieve this, relevant documents on higher education, published by decision-making bodies and non-profit organizations, were selected for analysis. In addition to the policy documents analyzed, various legal texts published in the Official Gazette, including laws, regulations, and other legislative materials, were also examined. Table 2 provides a list of these documents.

Upon analyzing Table 2, it is clear that the documents cover a broad and up-to-date spectrum of topics related to higher education. Most are policy documents prepared by upper-level organizations, with some reports and academic publications also included. From these documents, Turkish public institutions most frequently mentioned for their contributions to IoHE were identified. These institutions and their internationalization practices are presented in Table 3 using frequency analysis.

Table 2.

Documents published by decision-making bodies or non-profit organizations

Code	Name	Source
PD-1	2022 General Report on University Monitoring and Evaluation	CoHE (2022a)
PD-2	Regional Development-Oriented Universities	CoHE (2020).
PD-3	Workshop on Improving Doctoral Teaching	CoHE (2022b)
PD-4	Migration and Education Book	Koçak-Tufan et al. (2019)
PD-5	Tenth Development Plan 2014-2018	Republic of Turkey Ministry of Development. (2013)
PD-6	Eleventh Development Plan 2019-2023	Presidency of the Republic of Turkey, Presidency of Strategy and Budget Presidency. (2019)
PD-7	Internationalization strategy document in higher education 2018-2022	CoHE. (2017a)
PD-8	A current overview of internationalization of higher education: International academics in Türkiye	Seggie and Ergin (2018)
PD-9	Making Turkish universities a center of attraction for international students within the framework of internationalization of Higher Education Research Project Report	Kadioğlu and Özer (2015)
PD-10	Growth, Quality, Internationalization A Roadmap for Turkish Higher Education	Çetinsaya (2014)
PD-11	International Conference on Syrian Students in Turkish Higher Education (Hatay)	CoHE (2017b)
PD-12	Higher Education System in Türkiye 2021	CoHE (2021a)
PD-13	Türkiye's Higher Education Strategy	CoHE (2007)
PD-14	Action Plan for Improving University-Industry Cooperation	Çelik (2021)
PD-15	Goal-oriented internationalization in Higher Education	CoHE (2021b)
PD-16	Maarif Foundation Annual Report	Maarif Foundation Foundation (2022)
PD-17	Regulation on Quality Assurance in Higher Education and the Higher Education Quality Council	Higher Education Quality Assurance and Council Regulation (2018)
PD-18	Presidential decree on the organization of the relevant institutions (Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities)	Presidential Decree (2018, Art. 732)
PD-19	National Agency Institutional Mission and Vision Statement	UA. (2023)
PD-20	Presidential Decree on the Organization of the Presidency	Presidential Decree (2018, Art. 314)

Tablo 3.

The most frequently mentioned Turkish public institutions and their internationalization practices

Turkish Public Institution Theme	Department/ Internationalization practice Sub-theme	Frequency
The Council of Higher Education (CoHE)	Study in Türkiye	PD-5, PD-7, PD-9, PD-10, PD-12, PD-15, PD-16
	CoHE Virtual Fairs	
Ministry of National Education (MoNE)	General Directorate of Higher Education and Education Abroad (YYDEGM)	PD-4, PD-8, PD-9, PD-10, PD-20
	YLSY Scholarship Program	
Ministry of Science, Industry, and Technology	The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Türkiye (TUBITAK)	PD-1, PD-2, PD-3, PD-5, PD-6, PD-7, PD-8, PD-9, PD-10, PD-13, PD-14
Ministry of Culture and Tourism	Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB)	PD-4, PD-7, PD-9, PD-10, PD-11, PD-15, PD-18
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Turkish National Agency (UA)	PD-3, PD-7, PD-9, PD-12, PD-13, PD-19
Ministry of Interior	Presidency of Migration Management	PD-4, PD-7, PD-11, PD-15
Yunus Emre Institute (YEE)	Academic and Scientific Cooperation Portal of Türkiye (TABIP)	PD-3, PD-7, PD-8, PD-9, PD-10, PD-11, PD-15
	Turkish Proficiency Exam (TYS)	
Turkish Maarif Foundation (TMF)		PD-4, PD-16
Turkish Higher Education Quality Council		PD-1, PD-6, PD-7, PD-12, PD-14, PD-17

Institutions with the highest frequency were then established as primary themes for analysis, while the specific internationalization activities of each institution served as sub-themes. Following the qualitative research stages described by Miles & Huberman (2019), this study adopted a three-stage approach: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. During data reduction, collected data were simplified, organized, and categorized into themes. Policy documents were examined to identify the most frequently referenced public institutions, which were then designated as key components for further analysis. In the data display stage, tables were created to visually consolidate and present the extensive information, providing a clear overview of themes and sub-themes, including the internationalization activities of frequently mentioned institutions. Finally, in the conclusion drawing and verification phase, the data were interpreted, patterns were identified, and meaningful insights were drawn. Each of these steps contributes to the trustworthiness of the findings, ensuring a reliable and accurate representation of the role of Turkish public institutions in the internationalization of higher education.

Content analysis was selected as the primary data analysis method for this study, allowing for a systematic examination of the policy documents to uncover recurring themes and patterns related to the role of Turkish public institutions in higher education internationalization. This approach enabled the identification and organization of relevant themes and sub-themes, facilitating a structured presentation of findings. Transitioning to the findings section, the results derived from this content analysis highlight the specific contributions and activities of each institution within the IoHE framework.

Findings about The Council of Higher Education (CoHE)

Until 1981, the higher education system in Türkiye consisted of different institutions. These can be listed as follows: universities, academies affiliated with the MoNE, two-year vocational colleges and conservatories, three-year education institutes, and YAYKUR, an institution that provided distance education by letter. Since the structure containing these different institutions showed signs of failure and corruption over time, a new structure was needed, and the 1981 university reform was realized. All higher education institutions in Türkiye were brought together under the supervision of the Council of Higher Education (CoHE). CoHE has become an autonomous institution responsible for the oversight of all higher education (CoHE, 2023a; Ergin, 2022; Erdoğan & Toprak, 2012; Williamson, 1987). As explained in Policy Document 10 (PD-10) (Çetinsaya, 2014):

“It was established as a result of all these pleas for coordination and planning that were felt to be needed throughout the 1970s.”

Examining the Council of Higher Education’s organizational structure reveals that it is composed of a president, general assembly, and executive board. Moreover, there are several administrative units. CoHE, with all of the universities, is one of the important institutions working on the IoHE in Türkiye. It has been working on joining the European Higher Education Area, having comparable higher education diplomas and degrees, implementing the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), developing higher education qualification frameworks and quality



assurance systems, and so on. Moreover, Türkiye's higher education strategy (CoHE, 2007) and the internationalization strategy document in higher education 2018-2022 (CoHE, 2017a) have opened up new horizons.

Study in Türkiye

StudyinTürkiye.gov.tr is a website launched by CoHE to increase the internationalization and international visibility of Turkish higher education. As explained in PD-9 (Kadioğlu & Özer, 2015):

“For institutional promotion of Turkish universities, the Council of Higher Education (CoHE) launched the ‘Study in Turkey’ (www.studyinturkey.gov.tr) website in 2013, under the slogan ‘Key for Future,’ to attract international students to Turkey. Designed to serve in Turkish, English, and Russian, the ‘Meeting Point’ concept aims to position Turkey as a hub for international higher education, and as part of this initiative, brochures under the ‘Being a Student in Turkey is AMAZING’ brand were prepared in Turkish, English, French, German, Arabic, Russian, and Bosnian.”

On this site, which is especially aimed at international students, prospective students can find information about the general structure of Turkish higher education, statistical information, Turkish culture, cities, climate, transportation opportunities, food culture, and Turkish learning opportunities. *StudyinTürkiye* also has the feature of listing all universities and programs in Türkiye according to certain criteria. Prospective students can select and list universities according to level, city, language, state/foundation, formal/remote/open, etc. At the same time, this site contains information on many subjects, such as scholarships, visa procedures, health services, accommodations, job opportunities, recognition, and equivalence. *Studyinturkiye.gov.tr* can be described as an effective platform in terms of providing the information needed by candidates who want to become international students in Türkiye in dozens of languages.

CoHE Virtual Fairs

The first of the CoHE Virtual Fairs was held on 20-22 July 2020, which aimed to protect the higher education system from the negative and devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. In this process, where physical mobility has decreased, emergency remote teaching has become widespread, and innovative methods and digitalization have come to the fore, organizing a virtual fair in Türkiye for IoHE was considered important. Due to the centralized structure of higher education in Türkiye, CoHE virtual fairs were also launched in a centralized form. Prospective students from many different countries of the world have explored universities in Türkiye through the address <http://www.virtualfair-yok.gov.tr>. Virtual fairs organized by CoHE can also be considered a step towards digital internationalization.

In support of this effort, the examined document PD-7 (CoHE, 2017a) includes the following statement:

“Additionally, in an effort to enhance recognition and awareness, universities are actively encouraged to participate in educational fairs abroad.”

This finding indicates that CoHE had previously recommended digitalization-focused internationalization strategies in policy documents, and these strategies were later implemented in a centralized manner through virtual fairs.

Findings about the Ministry of National Education (MoNE)

The Ministry of National Education (MoNE, 2023) is the highest-level public institution responsible for education and training in Türkiye. MoNE has the broadest decision-making and policy-making authority at all educational levels in Türkiye. At the same time, MoNE aims to maintain and develop Türkiye's educational collaborations with Europe and other countries. For this purpose, there are various sub-management units within MoNE.

General Directorate of European Union and Foreign Relations (ABDIGM)

The General Directorate of the European Union and Foreign Relations (ABDIGM) is a sub-unit of MoNE. It cooperates with the European Union and other international organizations; provides the coordination of projects based on international cooperation; conducts studies on international students who come to Türkiye with scholarships provided by foreign governments and institutions or Türkiye; and carries out works for cooperation with countries and communities that have a linguistic, historical or cultural union with Türkiye and other countries in the field of education and training (Presidential Decree, 2018, Art. 77/B).

General Directorate of Higher Education and Education Abroad (YYDEGM)

The General Directorate of Higher Education and Foreign Education (YYDEGM) is another sub-unit of MoNE. YYDEGM is responsible for performing several tasks:

- To cooperate with other institutions in determining the procedures and principles regarding the higher education entry system,
- To carry out analyses related to the number of those who will be sent abroad for higher education, their fields of education, the qualifications to be sought in those who will be sent, study abroad, and employment,
- To carry out education and training services for Turkish citizens abroad, to take the necessary measures to ensure their adaptation to the education system on their return home,
- To prepare the education and training programs, textbooks, educational tools, and materials of the schools and institutions of the Ministry abroad,

- To carry out the necessary studies to determine the goals, policies, and standards regarding education and training” (Presidential Decree, 2018, Art. 314).

YLSY Scholarship Program

YLSY Scholarship Program is offered under the coordination of The General Directorate of Higher Education and Education Abroad (YYDEGM). Through the YLSY scholarship program, Türkiye sends candidates who want to study abroad. In this way, Türkiye aims to meet the need for well-trained human resources. A selection and placement exam is held for students who will be sent abroad for postgraduate education. Candidates determined at the end of the exam are entitled to receive education in different countries of the world. As a finding, PD-8 (Seggie and Ergin, 2018) stated:

“YLSY program, launched in 2006 by the Turkish Ministry of National Education with the slogan “Five Thousand Students in Five Years” is considered one of Türkiye’s higher education initiatives aimed at enhancing the country’s soft power internationally.”

According to Çelik (2012), the YLSY Scholarship Program sends the country’s most talented graduate students to the world’s most prestigious universities for graduate education. These distinguished academics are expected to enrich Turkish universities academically with their newly acquired knowledge and skills. To address the issues of both supply and demand in academic education, the YLSY initiative plans to provide postgraduate education funding for one thousand researchers per year. Similarly, Erden (2013) highlighted that the goals and objectives of the MoNE-YLSY scholarship program are student mobility, educating future academics, obtaining international experiences, supporting newly opened universities, contributing to scientific breakthroughs in Türkiye, improving language skills, and worldwide networking.

Findings about the Ministry of Science, Industry, and Technology

The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Türkiye (TUBITAK)

The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Türkiye (TÜBİTAK) supports all scientific activities of scientists in various ways, encouraging academics through scholarships and awards. Post-doctoral studies, publication incentive awards, and project support are the most common ones. These supports include domestic and international academic activities, aiming to give international perspectives to researchers. As a supporting finding, PD-10 (Çetinsaya, 2014) highlights the following:

“Short-term academic mobility programs abroad, managed jointly by CoHE and TÜBİTAK, play a significant role in the internationalization of higher education in Türkiye”.

Furthermore, Kara (2022) states that international research

in Türkiye is mostly supported by TUBITAK. International scientific publications are among the leading scientific indicators. TÜBİTAK’s encouragement of international scientific publications since 1993 has created serious awareness in Türkiye (Tonta, 2017).

Findings about Ministry of Culture and Tourism

Ministry of Culture and Tourism (KTB) aims to research, develop, protect, keep alive, evaluate, disseminate, promote, and adopt national, historical, cultural, and touristic values and thus contribute to the strengthening of national unity and economic development (KTB, 2023). In addition, KTB is home to strategic institutions called the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB) and the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA). Among these institutions, especially YTB conducts leading studies on international students.

Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB)

According to Presidential Decree No. 4, the duties of the YTB are as follows:

- To carry out studies on Turks living abroad and to find solutions to their problems,
- To carry out activities for kin and related communities to develop social, cultural, and economic relations,
- To work for international students (international students brought by other institutions, excluding European Union projects, Higher Education Council, and universities) to complete their education in Türkiye (Presidential Decree, 2018, Art. 732).

YTB is an official government agency in Türkiye that is responsible for the coordination and implementation of policies and programs that relate to Turkish citizens living abroad as well as other communities that have a connection to Türkiye. Its primary focus is on the Turkish diaspora in other countries. The primary objective of the YTB is to fortify the links that bind these communities and Türkiye, as well as to offer support and aid to Turkish nationals who are currently residing outside of Türkiye in a range of domains, such as education, culture, Turkish language, and social services. In addition, the YTB strives to promote Türkiye’s image and interests overseas, as well as building collaboration and understanding between different cultures and nations. The basic working areas of YTB consist of Turkish citizens living abroad, sister communities, and international students. YTB has a program called the Türkiye Scholarship (Türkiye Bursları) that helps pay for students from other countries who want to study in Türkiye. Most of the time, these scholarships go to students who want to go to Turkish universities to study at the undergraduate, graduate, or post-graduate level. The scholarships cover expenses such as tuition fees, accommodation, and other living costs. As a supporting finding, PD-15 (CoHE, 2021b) notes the following:

“Since the 2012/2013 academic year, the Turkish



government has provided support to tens of thousands of international students through the ‘Türkiye Scholarships’ under the administration of the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB).”

Moreover, Aras and Mohammed (2018) stated that the Türkiye Scholarship Program helps boost the attractiveness of Türkiye’s universities, which in turn increases the country’s soft power. Through these programs, Türkiye can spread its cultural ideals and cultivate a group of intellectuals on whom it can rely in its efforts to forge stronger ties with governments throughout the world.

Findings about the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The representation of a country in its diplomatic interactions with other nations and international organizations is the responsibility of a nation’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In most cases, this entails developing and implementing an official foreign policy, negotiating and signing treaties and agreements, and fostering and maintaining diplomatic relations with other countries. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs can participate in educational exchanges and programs with other nations. These exchanges and programs may include student exchange programs, cultural exchange programs, and scholarship programs. These initiatives have the potential to foster international collaboration and understanding, as well as provide educational and cultural opportunities for students and teachers. In this context, there is a National Agency (UA) operating under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye.

Turkish National Agency (UA)

The UA’s responsibilities include announcing education and youth programs run by the European Union in Türkiye; carrying out, coordinating, and monitoring participation in these programs; and reporting participation statistics to the European Commission (Official Gazette, 2018). In the documents analyzed in this study, the National Agency is described as a stakeholder in internationalization, and it is stated that the Erasmus+ Program is implemented through national agencies established in participating countries (CoHE, 2017a, PD-7). The European Union’s Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps (ESC) are the two most prominent initiatives that UA has carried out in Türkiye.

The mission of the UA is as follows (UA, 2023):

- “To carry out the European Union programs in the fields of education, youth, and sports in the most effective way and to ensure that citizens, institutions, and organizations benefit from these programs to the maximum.”

Some of the visions of the UA are as follows (UA, 2023):

- “To maximize the contribution of education, youth, and sports projects carried out in international cooperation to the development of the country’s

human capital in terms of quantity and quality,

- To ensure that programs aimed at developing the personal, social, and professional skills of citizens and the capacities of institutions and organizations reach the most accurate target groups and new users in terms of needs, efficiency, and impact,
- To take measures for the best representation of the country in international activities to be held at home and abroad and for the participants to recognize and promote their own culture and values correctly,
- To contribute to the elimination of obstacles to the internationalization of institutions and organizations in the fields of education, youth, and sports as much as possible.”

Findings about the Ministry of Interior

The Turkish Ministry of the Interior is responsible for internal security and operations. It aims to provide continuous public services to citizens. It organizes administrative and security operations within the country’s boundaries. The Presidency of Migration Management, which falls under the Ministry of Interior, manages the transactions of foreign nationals who come to Türkiye for various purposes and who will live in the country for a certain time.

Presidency of Migration Management

The Presidency of Migration Management coordinates the residence processes for international students studying in Türkiye. With the “Residence Permit” provided by the Presidency of Migration Management in the province where their university is situated, international students can legally stay in Türkiye. As a supporting finding, PD-15 (CoHE, 2021b) highlights the following:

“A cooperation protocol between the Ministry of Interior’s Presidency of Migration Management and the Council of Higher Education allows international students, post-doctoral researchers, and academics, along with their families, to extend their stay in Türkiye after completing their studies, thereby facilitating future opportunities and collaborative work within the country.”

The Presidency of Migration Management has developed a handbook entitled “Student Residence Permit Application Process.” This multilingual handbook covers the legal procedures that overseas students must complete in Türkiye. To assist the adaptation and operations of non-citizens in Türkiye, the Presidency of Migration Management has published a wide range of and comprehensive manuals. All of these manuals and publications are available at <https://www.goc.gov.tr>.

Findings about Yunus Emre Institute (YEE)

The mission of the Yunus Emre Institute (YEE) is to create the necessary documentation to promote Türkiye, the Turkish language, Turkish history, and Turkish culture and art. The YEE helps international students study Turkish and Turkish culture and art. It is a non-profit organization whose mission is to broaden Türkiye's international network of friends and allies via cultural interaction. The YEE operates more than 63 cultural institutions in different countries (YEE, 2023). As a supporting finding, PD-8 (Seggie and Ergin, 2018) notes the following:

“Through the Yunus Emre Institute, summer schools and courses are organized in various countries around the world to spread the Turkish language and culture.”

Another policy document examined, PD-10 (Çetinsaya, 2014), states:

“Universities should be encouraged to take more initiative in the field of internationalization; applicable and sustainable internationalization strategies should be developed in cooperation with CoHE, ..., Yunus Emre Institute, ..., and similar institutions and organizations.”

This indicates a collaborative approach to internationalization in which universities and various government agencies, including the Yunus Emre Institute, work together to create sustainable strategies. The cooperation among these entities not only amplifies Türkiye's cultural reach but also enhances the nation's influence through coordinated educational and cultural efforts worldwide.

Academic and Scientific Cooperation Portal of Türkiye (TABİP)

The Academic and Scientific Cooperation Project of Türkiye (TABİP) is an initiative spearheaded by YEE and supported by the Republic of Türkiye's Presidency. TABİP's stated goals are to increase Türkiye's international academic standing, introduce Türkiye's academic activities, and foster international collaborations between Turkish institutions of higher learning (TABİP, 2023).

Turkish Proficiency Exam (TYS)

The YEE has established the Turkish Proficiency Exam (TPE) in line with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages to evaluate the linguistic competence of speakers of Turkish, both native and non-native. By developing the TPE, the YEE hopes to pave the way for international students to more easily enrol in and get admission to Turkish universities (YEE, 2023).

Findings about the Turkish Maarif Foundation (TMF)

The data obtained from PD-16 (Maarif Foundation, 2022) provides supporting evidence for the Turkish Maarif

Foundation's global educational reach. The Turkish Maarif Foundation (TMF) is a non-profit organization working for the public welfare by establishing preschool, primary, secondary, and higher education institutions worldwide. In addition, it establishes libraries, labs, arts, and sports facilities to supplement the educational process. Moreover, the Career Follow-up and Guidance System assists in the career planning of graduates. In this regard, the TMF describes itself as “Türkiye's gateway to the field of international education”. TMV provides education in 49 countries and conducts diverse activities in 67 countries worldwide. It serves approximately 50,000 students in 429 educational institutions and 42 dorms (TMV, 2023). With its worldwide educational activities (İstanbul Education Summit, etc.) and publications (International Maarif Magazine, Maarif Family Bulletin, etc.) TMV supports Türkiye's efforts in international education.

Findings about the Turkish Higher Education Quality Council (THEQC)

Turkish Higher Education Quality Council (THEQC) functions as a centralized, autonomous and independent body responsible for coordinating the quality procedures of the universities. THEQC is recognized as Türkiye's premier higher education institution in terms of academic excellence.

“The THEQC is a public legal entity with administrative and financial autonomy and special budget founded with the aim of evaluating the quality levels of higher education institutions' education and research activities and administrative services in accordance with the national and international quality standards, and coordinating the processes of accreditation, internal and external quality assurance, and authorization of independent external evaluation organizations” (THEQC, 2024).

The primary responsibilities of the Higher Education Quality Board are outlined as follows (Higher Education Quality Assurance and Council Regulation, 2018):

- Establishing national policies and strategies concerning quality assurance within the higher education system and making them accessible to the public,
- Engaging in activities to foster and promote a culture of quality within the higher education system,
- Promoting the development of internal quality assurance systems in higher education institutions and providing guidance to these institutions,
- Monitoring initiatives related to higher education quality assurance systems both domestically and internationally, and conducting collaborative efforts on both levels,
- Setting forth the principles, quality criteria, and regulations for external evaluation and accreditation processes.



Discussion

This paper is a modest contribution to the ongoing discussions about CoHE's centralized structure and IoHE. When glancing at the institutions working to bring internationalization to Türkiye's higher education system, a remarkable picture emerges. It should come as no surprise that the (CoHE) plays a pivotal role in the formation of policy regarding the internationalization of Türkiye's higher education system. Once more, the highly centralized nature of the Turkish higher education system is mirrored in its approach to internationalization efforts. In this regard, the (CoHE), generates guiding documents about of internationalization, develops policies, and manages internationalization by encouraging it from the center. Coercive isomorphism is evident in CoHE's influence and authority in directing the internationalization efforts of higher education institutions. On the other hand, the mimetic and normative isomorphism within the Turkish higher education system is notable in the contributions of other ministries and public foundations. These entities, driven by the need to align with perceived successful practices and adhere to established norms, collaborate with CoHE to further the internationalization agenda. The collaborative efforts of these institutions highlight the influence of mimetic and normative pressures within the higher education landscape. The current study is consistent with that of Uslu (2008), who states that CoHE makes various attempts to increase the success of universities in international rankings, and Şeremet (2015), who argues that because of CoHE's centralized and bureaucratic structure, universities in Türkiye tend to adopt the policies and procedures established by the CoHE rather than develop their own plans. Günay (2011), asserts that universities approach new internal and external problems through CoHE or the central structure. This way of thinking prevents universities from criticizing themselves. In this way, Günay underlines the need for reform in higher education.

Over the course of the past few years, the higher education system in Türkiye has taken several significant steps toward internationalization. Despite Türkiye's developing and expanding higher education system, it is evident that the IoHE requires improvement. CoHE's release of the major policy documents on internationalization was a big step. "Growth, quality, internationalization: A road map for higher education in Türkiye" (Çetinsaya, 2014) was published in 2014, followed by an "Internationalization strategy document in higher education 2018-2022" (CoHE, 2017a) in 2017. Later on, CoHE published the document Target-oriented internationalization in Higher Education (CoHE, 2021) aimed at structural change in internationalization. Strategies were developed through other public institutions and ministries to identify target countries. In light of the current circumstances, it is clear that Türkiye has gained significant momentum in

the internationalization of higher education. However, there are research results that contradict this finding like Çetinsaya (2014) and Erdoğan (2014), who identified a low degree of internationalization in Turkish universities. Similarly, Tekneci (2016) emphasizes that Türkiye is behind the OECD average in terms of international tertiary education students.

This study asserts that the development plans, which are prepared by the Republic of Türkiye on subjects such as economy, health, education, transportation, social security, and justice, serve as input for the policies decided by CoHE. In this regard, development plans and CoHE implementations are in sync. To illustrate, the goal of the tenth development plan was to increase the number of different types of universities and colleges and make the country's higher education system more appealing to international students and academics. A similar emphasis on quality in internationalization was a goal of the eleventh development plan. These objectives were formally endorsed and outlined in CoHE policy documents later on. Thus, it is clear that development plans are the most common starting point for CoHE internationalization practices. Similar to the findings of the current study, Doğramacı (2007, p. 21), also points out that CoHE should act "in accordance with the principles and policies of the State Planning Organization", the institution that publishes development plans.

An additional major finding is the significance of the studies conducted by CoHE on *studyinTürkiye.com*. CoHE's *studyinTürkiye.com* website is visited by millions of international students and prospective students each year who are seeking in-depth information about Türkiye and its higher education system. This content captures interest because of its dynamic nature. *StudyinTürkiye.com*, a well-organized hub for international students and those thinking about studying in Türkiye has emerged as a crucial resource for promoting Türkiye's reputation as a destination for quality higher education abroad.

This study reveals that CoHE-organized virtual fairs are another productive step in the internationalization of Türkiye's higher education. This innovative initiative, which began during the pandemic, exemplifies CoHE's commitment to providing ongoing assistance to academic institutions at the stage of internationalization. Türkiye's efforts to internationalize via digital means can be seen as a success story. The importance of international fairs and inter-university cooperation protocols is also supported by Ünal (2019).

The investigations have uncovered that numerous stakeholders and institutions under numerous ministries do in-depth studies toward internationalizing Türkiye's higher education. These ministries can be listed as follows:

MoNE; Ministry of Science, Industry, and Technology; Ministry of Culture and Tourism; Ministry of Foreign Affairs; and Ministry of Interior. There is little doubt that the ministries, together with other institutions and shareholders, play a managerial role in Türkiye's efforts to internationalize its higher education.

YLSY stands out as one of the most significant illustrations of these stakeholders toward internationalization. Türkiye's brightest academic minds are allowed to broaden their horizons and further their careers with support from the YLSY Scholarship Program, run by the General Directorate of Higher Education and Education Abroad of the MoNE. This work is crucial for preventing the brain drain and expanding Turkish institutions' global outlook. Talented students who are interested in working in the international arena but do not want to leave Türkiye permanently can benefit from this scholarship program. Certainly, there is an opportunity for improvement in the YLSY Scholarship Program. To get better results from the program, it would be advantageous to increase both the direct inputs and indirect outputs of the program's funding. There are several studies evaluating the program in the literature. Although the number of researchers receiving funding through the initiative is reported to be far below expectations (Kara & Çalık, 2022), Aktekin and Tekben (2019) state that the individual and national contributions made by those who have received postgraduate training through YLSY are substantial. Internationally, YLSY scholars become a major asset to their schools. However, studies suggest that people who took part improved primarily in the areas of learning a new language and growing as individuals. A small amount of benefit is seen from bringing in foreign expertise and technology. As can be seen, the goal of the YLSY Scholarship Program is not to help individuals advance their careers; rather, it is to give the system and its institutions knowledge, perspectives, technologies, projects, collaborations, publications, and so on that will make these things better.

According to the findings, TÜBİTAK, which is reporting to the Ministry of Science, Industry, and Technology, is another notable partner organization in Türkiye. TÜBİTAK is a valuable resource for scientists and scholars. Scholarships and fellowships are very helpful for academics seeking international experience or post-doctoral study opportunities. It is believed that the results of these investigations will increase Türkiye's profile abroad. Erdogan's (2014) view is that the researcher exchange funds and programs established within TÜBİTAK support internationalization practices. Uslu (2008), on the other hand, states that the policies aimed at expanding the support programs for international projects and cooperation with industry and even increasing the share of industrial organizations and the business world in these programs will make significant contributions to the ranking success of universities in Türkiye.

This study identifies the Ministry of Culture and Tourism's YTB as another key stakeholder in public diplomacy that concentrates on the Turkish people who live abroad, sister communities, and international students. YTB has developed an innovative set of procedures that can be used to internationalize higher education. Türkiye Scholarships are the most vital of these. Thousands of interviews, both online and at embassies and in person, are done annually, and thousands of scholarships are awarded. The purpose of these grants is to increase Türkiye's global clout by supporting international students. Accordingly, the "soft power" potential of higher education is utilized by the YTB. According to Kavak and Baskan (2001), the new balances that emerged following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 created new opportunities for cooperation between the newly independent Turkic Republics and the Republic of Türkiye. The historical and cultural ties between these nations have facilitated bilateral and multilateral agreements in the fields of economy, tourism, social security, law, and most significantly, education. The Great Student Project is among the most significant opportunities. Ünal (2019) emphasizes that the perspective that began with the "Great Student Project" has been maintained by "Türkiye Scholarships." Approximately 7,000 graduates of Turkish universities have been working in Kyrgyzstan since the country's independence. These people have power in both the public and private sectors. Türkiye's education diplomacy through Türkiye Scholarships improves Türkiye's image in Kyrgyzstan, contributes to official relations, advances commercial relations, and enhances civil relations between the two nations.

Erasmus+ program in Türkiye is governed by the Turkish National Agency (UA), which is part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and this makes UA a leading participant. Since every year thousands of students and academics travel to other countries and universities in Europe, the Erasmus+ exchange program plays an important role in the IoHE. According to CoHE data for 2021-2022 (CoHE, 2023b), 6596 students went abroad within the scope of the Erasmus Exchange Program; 4019 students came to Türkiye.

The current study states that residence permits for international students are issued by the Presidency of Migration Management within the Ministry of Interior. This license ensures that international students can legally live and study in Türkiye without facing any difficulties in integrating into society.

This analysis also highlights YEE as an active participant and stakeholder in the Turkish education of international students. The YEE is an institution that primarily teaches foreigners the Turkish language, Turkish history, Turkish culture, and Turkish art. Moreover, by employing soft power, the YEE contributes to Türkiye's efforts to increase its global reputation and influence. Through its studies



of the Turkish Proficiency Exam, YEE has made it a priority to ensure that the Turkish language is tested on all four skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing. It is possible to say that the quality of Turkish language instruction that international students and other foreigners get has improved as a result of these studies. This highlight is similar to that reported by Eren (2020) which also focuses on the soft power characteristic of YEE.

It is clear from the findings that TMF is one of the non-profit organizations claiming to carry out some work to bring education to an international dimension in Türkiye. This claim of TMF stems from its authority to open schools abroad. This is an extraordinary power that requires state-level seriousness and consideration in its application. Akgün and Özkan (2020) and Karahan and Abbas (2022) attributed the concept of soft power to the TMF.

When the Turkish Higher Education Quality Council (THEQC) documents are examined, numerous quality assurance initiatives are evident in Turkish higher education, including the development of mission, vision, and strategic plans with clear goals and performance indicators, institution-wide quality policies and defined roles, implementation of workflow charts for transparent processes, Alumni Tracking Systems for graduate feedback, regular satisfaction surveys for current students, accreditation of various programs across academic units, ongoing external evaluations in four dimensions, designation of several universities as research universities with CoHE support, and inclusion of universities in the Regional Development-Oriented Mission Differentiation and Specialization Project based on regional parameters (Eriçok, 2023). It can be said that there is a strong relationship between quality assurance and internationalization efforts of higher education institutions in Türkiye because these efforts aim to increase the international recognition and cooperation of Turkish universities. THEQC also aims to increase the compliance of Turkish universities with international standards and their competitiveness in the global arena. Thus, the work of THEQC supports the internationalization steps of Turkish higher education.

Conclusions

In summary, this paper sheds light on the intricate network of actors involved in the Internationalization of Higher Education (IoHE) in Türkiye, portraying a landscape where CoHE, universities, ministries, and various public foundations collaboratively orchestrate their efforts. Through the lens of neo-institutionalization theory, it becomes evident that CoHE emerges as the central figure, wielding significant influence in steering Türkiye's universities towards global integration. The centralized nature of Türkiye's higher education system is reflected in the IoHE initiatives, propelled from the core by CoHE.

Essentially, CoHE stands as the vanguard of IoHE effort, embodying the coercive isomorphism described by neo-institutionalization theory.

Moreover, this study uncovers a spectrum of key stakeholder institutions, including the MoNE, the Ministry of Science, Industry, and Technology, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Interior, the YEE, and the TMF, each playing pivotal roles in Türkiye's IoHE landscape. Examining the diverse motivations of these ministries and public foundations through the lens of mimetic and normative isomorphism reveals a blend of factors shaping Türkiye's higher education internationalization efforts, as described by neo-institutionalization theory.

One significant example of Türkiye's internationalization efforts is its strategic focus on African countries. Over the past two decades, Türkiye has increasingly prioritized political and educational diplomacy with Africa, resulting in a considerable rise in African international students within Turkish universities. This trend reflects the interplay of coercive and mimetic isomorphism, where centralized policies align with state-directed foreign policy objectives while also emulating successful internationalization practices observed globally. The engagement with Africa not only diversifies Türkiye's higher education landscape but also serves as a cornerstone of its broader soft power strategy.

Furthermore, the study highlights the growing importance of public foundations, alongside traditional public institutions, in the field of IoHE. It's noteworthy that local institutions are also starting to show global behaviors, reflecting the influence of mimicking pressures within Türkiye's higher education system.

However, despite the significant progress Türkiye's higher education system has made towards internationalization, this study reveals a critical gap: the absence of a comprehensive roadmap encompassing the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders. This gap echoes the uncertainties highlighted by neo-institutionalization theory, emphasizing the need for a cohesive, shared vision among Türkiye's diverse IoHE stakeholders.

Future Directions and Implications

The results of this research reveal the multidimensional terrain of Internationalization of Higher Education (IoHE) in Türkiye, disclosing a network of players with varying roles, ranging from CoHE to different ministries and public foundations. Nevertheless, despite the noteworthy advancements Türkiye's higher education system has made in the area of internationalization, a crucial gap remains: there isn't a comprehensive plan that clearly defines the roles of these various players. Future studies could focus more intently on the particular mechanisms that Türkiye's higher



education system uses to express neo-institutionalization pressures to close this gap. Investigating the ways in which normative, mimetic, and coercive isomorphism influences mold institutions, ministries, and public foundations' decision-making procedures could yield invaluable information. This could entail comparative analyses with international counterparts to identify best practices and areas for improvement, as well as longitudinal studies tracking the evolution of IoHE policies and practices.

Additionally, Türkiye's growing focus on African countries presents an important area for further research and strategic development. Future studies could explore the specific impact of Türkiye's educational diplomacy in Africa, particularly examining how partnerships with African universities and the increase in African students shape Türkiye's higher education landscape. Policymakers could benefit from a deeper understanding of how these efforts contribute to Türkiye's broader foreign policy objectives and its positioning as a global educational hub. Moreover, collaborative frameworks tailored to Africa's unique educational needs could foster mutual benefits, creating a model for sustainable and inclusive internationalization efforts.

Furthermore, the IoHE stakeholders in Türkiye also urgently need a collaborative framework and a common vision. The significance of creating a comprehensive plan that unites the goals and interests of CoHE, ministries, public foundations, and universities is highlighted by this study. The strategy needs to encompass not only the general objectives of internationalization but also the particular duties assigned to each stakeholder, thereby promoting a unified and well-coordinated approach. De Wit and Hunter (2015) also highlight the need for the collaboration of stakeholders and participants.

In addition, this study has implications for practice in addition to new directions for research. Initiatives aimed at increasing the capacity of Türkiye's higher education institutions to improve their internationalization efforts could be beneficial. This could entail developing international partnerships and collaborations, providing specialized training on global best practices to faculty and staff, and improving support systems for both incoming and departing international students.



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