

HIGHER EDUCATION REFORMS AND THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF TURKISH UNIVERSITIES

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Although medieval higher education institutions existed in the Turkic World, Turkish Higher Education in the modern sense dates back to the founding of a new Western-style higher education institution in Istanbul in the mid-nineteenth century, rather than reorganization of the existing Ottoman Institutions. Since then several attempts have been made to reform higher education. The last major attempt was in 1981 with the establishment of the Higher Education Council (YÖK), an autonomous body reporting to the president of the republic. It was to oversee the planning, establishing and coordination of universities and the allocation of resources. For the first time, privately funded universities could be established by non-profit foundations. Currently, 70 of these institutions coexist with 100 public universities.

Turkish universities have been quite active in their attempts to meet challenges of globalization and internationalization by actively seeking cooperation in research and teaching, mobility of students and faculty, promoting an increase in international publications and joining international bodies and institutions.

In this presentation, two public and two privately funded universities have been chosen as case studies to illustrate the internationalization of Turkish Higher Education in the new millennium by using various relevant parameters such as international institutional agreements, student and faculty mobility via European Union programs, percentage of international students and faculty, faculty development at overseas institutions, joint research projects. The establishment of various overseas universities, two publicly funded universities and six privately funded binational universities so far, is part of the outreach of Turkish Higher Education.

The international dimension of Turkish Universities is evolving steadily and with it the implications that these changes will bring is of utmost importance. In a globalized environment, higher education is an increasingly valuable commodity in a competitive world and Turkish Universities will be showing an increasing presence in this market.