In Regards to Higher Education Strategy, Assessment of Educational Activities in Public Universities: The Case of Turkey

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Suggested Citation:

Abstract

Problem Statement: With the increasing importance of information and research, the importance of education and training has also increased. Especially in higher education institutions, educators have started to instruct students in accordance with the requirements of the modern era, and universities have influenced the international and national competitive powers in the educational domain. Nowadays, universities in developed countries are not only the organizations that execute education and training services, but they are also the institutions that produce more academic studies to enhance their environments, contribute to society through their projects, and integrate with business and industry organizations. In connection with these goals the higher education sector can improve the performances of many universities and reconstruct them by changing and improving conditions. These changes can only be possible with appropriate strategies.

Purpose of the Study: This study reveals the present situation regarding education in public universities and aims to determine strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Within the framework of Turkey's higher-education strategy, the current state of the universities is discussed and certain suggestions were made.

Method: Considering that the main field of activity in universities is "training and education", the public universities in Turkey have been evaluated in this study via a content analysis of the strategic plans of "training and education activities". In total, the plans of 90 out of 103 state universities were analyzed according to a qualitative analysis. The dataset obtained was converted into numbers by means of the SPSS 15.0 program using frequency analysis.

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Results and Findings: Assessing the dataset obtained, one third of the universities stated that "maintaining a diversity of programs, enhancing social activities, achieving a close interaction between the students and academicians, and increasing quality and accreditation" were among their strengths. As for their weaknesses, "inadequacy of interaction with graduates; inadequacy of social fields; inadequacy of health, culture, and sport facilities; inadequacy of foreign language education; inadequacy of library opportunities; scarcity of graduate programs; inadequacy of psychological counseling and guidance services; inadequacy of scholarship support; scarcity of application-oriented studies; and inadequacy of educational material" were listed. Nearly half of the universities regard "exchange programs" as opportunities, and they focus on the "Bologna Process and Exchange". On the other hand, "increasing the number of public and private universities" is seen as a threat.

Conclusions and recommendations: As a result of the study, the categories for strengths in the higher education strategy include "education field, social activity, life culture, and communication". The weaknesses mentioned by the universities, as stated in the higher-education plan, can be strengthened with the strategies involving "physical opportunities, communication, social activities, life culture, scholarship and part-time work opportunities, student satisfaction, and educational implementations". For the eradication of the threats, one of which is the increasing number of public and private universities, educational strategies can be implemented at the correct times within the framework of the Bologna Process".

Key Words: Instruction, Organization, Strategic Planning, University SWOT Analysis

Introduction

In the organizations that adapt themselves to the requirements of knowledge in society, an increase in knowledge has become especially important within the fields in science and technology. In this atmosphere in which knowledge and research are becoming of greater significance, the quality of education has also been enhanced. Therefore, education is the main avenue of change and developments, including in its acquisition and pervasive improvements in every field. Especially students who are in line with the modern age have obtained their educations in higher education institutions, and the universities, themselves, have affected international competitive power. For this reason, the "strategic applications of higher education" are given emphasis in Turkey, and the country's goal is that the universities reach the standards of education found in developed countries. The main objective of this study is to ascertain the standards of "education" in higher education institutions, particularly for public universities. The dataset obtained is assessed within the scope of the "strategic applications of higher education" prepared by the Higher Education Council. At the same time, some assessments and suggestions concerning the current state of the public universities are given as well.

Public Universities within the Framework of Higher Education Strategies

We can reasonably say that there are micro and macro factors that affect competition among higher-education institutions. Education, which can be seen as one of these factors, has a great impact on the competition among universities (Kaldirimci, 2003, p.119). Increasing the number of students is only feasible with correct strategies and implementations within the services of education. In order to get competitive advantage and to implement these sorts of strategies, the current state of the institutions needs to be examined in an accurate way (Hepkul & Kagnicioglu, 1992).

Throughout the world, education has had social and economic outcomes (Fried et al., 2006, p. 6). The positive contributions of education, particularly in the fields of higher education, are recognized as being economically and socially necessary all over the world. However, it is critical that we place an emphasis on the contextual framework of education itself before we can mention the importance of education in higher education institutions. The lexical definition of education refers to the work of educating oneself in a particular field (Turkce Sozluk, 2005, p.605). Nowadays, education is seen as the state of behavioral change for specific purposes; it can be achieved within the individual's life itself and is a kind of development of one's capabilities for people and society in an appropriate and balanced manner (Aklan, 1979, p.4).

Education can also be defined as a process that creates awareness about oneself within the area of learning that allows the individual to select from and develop mental capabilities. In this process, adapting to changing conditions, updating skills and behaviours in an ongoing way, and creating convenient learning atmospheres are of great significance (Genc and Eryaman, 2008, p. 94). Additionally, education is the main avenue for the qualified training of people and for the formation of one's life, personality and character. Hence, each person comes to the fore as the product of the educational atmosphere in which he/she lives, and it is in this atmosphere that the individual is able to differentiate him- or herself from others. The increasing stress on education turns it into a programmable and sustainable tool. With this tool, each country establishes its own education system to meet the needs of qualified people in its society (Soyler, 2008, p.427). In summary, education is a perpetual process of developing knowledge and experience and is an instrument for the welfare of each individual and society (Kumar & Ahmad, 2008).

The changes taking place in other sectors of society have influenced education as well. The market economy, competition, and the enlargement of knowledge society and its systems have created an impact on education (Chareonwongsak, 2000). Higher education, the highest point in the education system, develops the abilities of the qualified people that society needs, on the one hand (Report of European Commission, 2013), and, on the other hand, it contributes to the production of new knowledge and technology by encouraging academic study and research that contributes to the development of societies (Yuksek, 2002, p. 262). The expected functions of higher education are to educate people; promote science and research; meet the needs of the human resource, which are also the needs of the economy; and contribute to the development of productivity. In this context, the functions of higher education institutions can be summarized as those involving education, the production of academic knowledge and research, and community service (Ozdem, 2008, p.115). Since the beginning of the 19th century, education has become the ultimate function of higher education institutions (Kavak, 1990: 19), which means that one of the main objectives of universities is to educate people. The process of educating people includes equipping students with necessary knowledge and capabilities, creating research excitement, and improving the

cultures of citizenship and life. The first part of this process in the universities can be carried out by the academic staff as pioneers in classrooms, laboratories, and libraries, while the second part will be realized through interaction within the students' lives (Turkiye'nin Yuksekogretim Stratejisi, 2007).

The public universities in Turkey, which were established within the scope of the Higher Education Law 2547, are organizations that include faculties, vocational schools, colleges, conservatories, and application and research centers, all for the benefit of society. They have a mixed financial system. Considering that the higher education sector costs the country 550 billion dollars, it is inevitable that the universities will compete. Thus, the enhancement of their strategies is a sort of sinequanon. Increasing the performance of Turkey's universities to meet the standards and structures of developed countries is only possible with the correct strategies and the implementation of those structures. In Turkey, the strategic approaches to education are stated in the following (Turkiye'nin Yuksekogretim Stratejisi, 2007):

1. *Physical Facilities***:** In order to enhance the quality of life at the universities, there should be a renovation of the facilities, where possible. Other services relating to accommodations, nourishment, health, sport, and entertainment are among the services provided by universities. They are also important components of life quality.

2. *Communication***:** The relationship between the academic staff and students must be formed on the basis of respect, and the interaction between students and academic staff must be fostered.

3. *Social Activities and Life Culture***:** Students must be involved in organizations that make them pioneers in different fields like philosophy, art, sport, and various hobby domains.

4. *Scholarship and Part-Time Job Opportunities***:** Scholarships and part-time work are the services that universities provide for students who have poor financial situations to fund their educations.

5. *Student Satisfaction***:** Universities must attach importance, in formal and informal ways, to student views about the courses and exams and must be sensitive to student criticism, which is crucial for both the quality and improvement of education and the establishment of democratic culture.

6. *Process of Bologna and Exchange Programs***:** The exchange programs within the framework of the Bologna Process and the MOUs signed by the universities are expected to contribute to an end to the deficiencies in this area.

7. *Student Clubs and Activities:* Student clubs are important tools for the socialization of the students. The development of these clubs and the encouragement of active membership will contribute to a more active university life. Based on the idea that the education of students not only depends on courses but on the university atmosphere as a whole, universities must have student organizations. In developed countries all around the world, student councils form the most critical aspect of the democratic culture and management processes. These institutions define themselves as the mechanisms through which students communicate their opinions and wishes to the university administration, and they develop the relationship between university students and societies. In Turkey, improving and supporting student organizations, like those found in developed countries, are ways that university administrations can encourage students' active participation in university life and the democracy and freedom of thought that are the most critical objectives of higher education.

8. *Implementations of Education:* The implementations of education include application-oriented education, foreign language education, the enhancement of the number of these units, differentiation in departments and programs, the update of new educational technologies, distance learning and other education systems, the end to discrimination on the basis of secondary school education, and the revision and restructuring of programs in vocational schools.

New technologies, new student profiles, new providers and shareholders, globalization, and the increase in competition among higher education institutions have become the factors that now determine and transform higher education (Levine, 2001). In the study conducted by Owlia and Aspinwall (Owlia & Aspinwall, 1996, p. 19), the researchers determined that the participants in the educational services of higher education institutions are the students, academic staff, and employees. According to these researchers, "adequate equipment, facility of transportation, accommodation opportunities, qualified and sufficient academic staff, communication skills, and accountability constitute the quality standards in higher education." Based on these findings, the strategies in higher education need to encompass these factors, which means that the educational standards offered to students must be in line with the requirements of the private sector and therefore need to be revised again (Wood, 1998, p. 168).

The various aspects of higher education in Turkey are open to debate because of a study conducted by UNESCO, which states that problems with resources, admission, quality, private universities, traditional rather than global ideologies, innovation, and autonomy do exist (Cepes, Unesco, p. 27). For that reason, universities are not institutions that depend solely on local resources, but rather they also have universal mechanisms for international contexts (De Angelis, 1998). The studies conducted by Romero and Rey (2002) revealed that public universities aim at state-based production, while the priority of private universities is to obtain the maximum profit. At this point, public universities are better than private universities with regard to research, quality, and costs (Romero & Rey, 2002, p. 1-24).

A Case Study on Public Universities with Regard to their Educational Domains

In Turkey, Strategic Planning was made law with the State Financial Management and Controlling Law, 5018, which became compulsory for the state institutions. The objective of this regulation is to strengthen the relationship between budget and the institutions' plans and policies (Strategic Planning, 2015). In Strategic Planning, there are statements of vision and mission, objectives, strategies, and SWOT Analysis (Stratejik Planlama Kilavuzu, 2006). The preparation of the Strategic Planning agenda, which has become a kind of "must" for state institutions and public universities, has been the responsibility of the universities as a whole in recent years. These agendas consist of "SWOT Analysis, statements of mission and vision, objectives, strategies, performance indicators, and activities" (Atan, 2008, p.416). Universities adhering to these parameters prepare their term plans and put them into effect. This study was prepared by taking into account the strategic plans of the universities, which determine their educational domains and conditions. The criteria used for the SWOT Analysis in higher education strategies were analyzed. The reason for the SWOT Analysis is that it outlines the positive and negative sides of the research, as well as the solutions and opportunities (Dyson, 2004, p.632). Therefore, the SWOT Analysis is a tool that determines the goals and the internal and external factors of an organization clearly so that they can be added to strategic planning (Chen & Bruneski, 2007, p.2). In this way, the current conditions of education in the universities were revealed and discussed within the framework of higher education strategies.

Method

Research Design

The objective of this study is to ascertain the current situation of the public universities and to assess their conditions within the framework of higher education strategy in Turkey and within this framework, content analysis as a sort of qualitative method, was used.

Study Group

The research group consisted of public universities in Turkey. Out of 108 public universities, the strategic plans of 90 of them, as well as their educational perspectives, were analyzed by considering "strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats" and by establishing some codes. SWOT Analyses were done to determine the criteria that affect their educational strategies, which include "physical facilities, communication, social activities, life culture, scholarship and part-time job opportunities, student satisfaction, the Bologna Process and exchange programs, student clubs and their activities, and educational implementations".

Research Instrument and Procedure

The research is qualitative in nature and includes observation, interview, and document analysis. In this qualitative research, content analysis was used. The analysis contains oral and written materials, which are categorized by message objectives. Then these messages are systematically converted into numbers (Tavsancil & Aslan, 2001, p.22). Content analysis was used to reveal the objective, measurable, and verifiable explanations of the communications, which are explicit and concrete (Fiske, 1990, p.176). While selecting the sample, goal-oriented sampling was used, which was associated with the aim of the research (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p.262). As for the method of the research, "document analysis" was used because it was compatible with the research problem. Written strategic plans were also analyzed (Yildirim, 2011, p.187).

Validity and Reliability

The codification procedures prepared were developed by the authors based on the literature, which was also analyzed by the experts in this domain. The coding procedures used within this context were both valid and reliable. The content validity of this procedure was also considered, and it was developed based on codes and sub-codes. The strategic plans and datasets of 90 public universities were analyzed with SPSS 15.0, and they were transformed into numbers that were analyzed with frequency analysis later on. The main codes of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats were established by using "education sub-codes". If the sub-codes under the main codes in the strategic plans were "available", they were given a "1" for the number. If they were not, they were coded as "0". The datasets were discussed depending on the scope of Turkey's higher education strategies, which were determined according to 8 strategic approaches. These approaches were also supported by suggestions we give.

1. *Strengths*
   a. Adequate classrooms and laboratories
   b. Interactions between students and teachers
   c. Increase in social and cultural activities
   d. Availability of social and cultural activities
   e. Scholarship and part-time job opportunities
   f. Structure of student involvement in technology
   g. Increase in student satisfaction

    h.   Increase in quality and enhancement of accreditation
    i.   ECTS Implementations
    j.   Student club activities
    k.   Surplus in the number of graduates
    l.   Foreign language education
    m.   Increase in the units
    n.   Diversity of the programs
    o.   Lifelong learning and certification
    p.   Lifelong learning center
    q.   Application-based departments
    r.   Fewer students per academic staff member
    s.   Update of educational contexts

2. Weaknesses
    a.   Inadequacy of social opportunities
    b.   Inadequacy of communication with graduate students
    c.   Inadequacy of health, cultural, and sports activities
    d.   Inadequacy of guidance and psychological services
    e.   Unavailability of career center
    f.   Inadequacy of scholarship opportunities for students
    g.   Inadequacy of application-oriented education
    h.   Inadequacy of foreign language implementation
    i.   Inadequacy in the number and variety of graduate programs
    j.   No renovation of vocational schools
    k.   Inadequacy of educational materials

3. Opportunities
    a.   Progress in the area of exchange programs
    b.   Opportunities from the Bologna Process
    c.   Opportunities based on international demand
    d.   Opportunity for distance education

4. Threats
    a.   Location in earthquake regions
    b.   Inadequacy of dormitories
    c.   Socially inadequate provinces
    d.   Increasing number of private universities
    e.   Other universities and their elections
    f.   Problem of employment
    g.   Changes in the laws and regulations
    h.   Poor quality of secondary school education
    i.   Open admission to vocational schools

Data Analysis

In the research, the strategic plans and educational perspectives of 90 public universities were analyzed by considering "strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats". Based on these categories, subcategories were determined by considering educational purposes. Then these subcategories were coded via the dataset of "present state analysis", which was also included in the strategic plans. The data gathered on the issue of "education" in this sample is organized in the following table.

Table 1.

Educational Strengths of Public Universities

Strenghts	Frequency		Total	Percentage (%)		Total %
	Yes	No		Yes	No	
Diversity of the programs	34	56	**90**	37,8	62,2	**100**
Increase in social activities	32	58	**90**	35,6	64,4	**100**
Interaction between students and the academic staff	26	64	**90**	28,9	71,1	**100**
Quality and accreditation Increase	26	64	**90**	28,9	71,1	**100**
Student involvement in technology	4	86	**90**	30,0	70	**100**
Active student clubs	21	69	**90**	23,3	76,7	**100**
Lifelong Learning Center and certification	18	72	**90**	20,0	80,0	**100**
Update in the contexts of education	18	72	**90**	20,0	80,0	**100**
Infrastructure for foreign language education	16	74	**90**	17,8	82,2	**100**
Increase in units	16	74	**90**	17,8	82,2	**100**
ECTS Implementations	10	80	**90**	11,1	88,9	**100**
Opportunities for scholarships and part-time work	8	82	**90**	8,9	91,1	**100**
Application-oriented departments	6	84	**90**	6,7	93,3	**100**
Fewer students per academic staff	6	84	**90**	6,7	93.3	**100**
Adequate classrooms and laboratories	5	85	**90**	5,6	94,4	**100**
Increase in student satisfaction	5	85	**90**	5,6	94,4	**100**
Increase in number of graduate students	5	85	**90**	5,6	94,4	**100**

Generally, it is of great importance for both interior and exterior participants to update the educational programs, that is to say, the curricula. As stated in Table 1, the public universities have "program diversity" with 37,8% which can be regarded as a crucial strength for them. The main reasons for this strength are that the universities have the capabilities to work in collaboration with industry and other sectors, pursue innovations, open new programs, and follow international policies. Diversity of programs suggests that students who get an education at the universities with a large number of preferred fields and with different types of programs have the advantage compared to others. As to higher education strategies, an increase in the number of programs offered can be regarded as implementations of education-oriented strategies (Table 1).

The term education involves concepts such as plan, objectives, changing behaviours, and being social culturally (Aklan, 1979, p.4). Because education refers to experiences outside school as well, individuals are always in close contact with their social environments due to education. Additionally, education is effective in influencing human beings and shaping their characters (Soyler, 2008, p.427). Therefore, the other functions of the universities shed light on education socially as well as culturally. A result of this study states that there is an increase in the social activities in 35,6% of public universities in Turkey. Universities have large organizations such as student clubs and councils for the social activities that provide opportunities for leadership, psychology counseling, travelling, social activities, and sports events (Lombardi et al., 2001, p.2-14). From this perspective, social activities play a very crucial role in education. This strength is associated with the "social activities and life culture" strategy found in the higher education strategy. A

Another result of the study states that communication between students and academicians, determined at 28,9% in Turkey, is a further strength of the public universities. A great many universities claim that they respond to the level of student satisfaction by putting an emphasis on "interaction between the academicians and students". In the context of organization, "customer satisfaction with services and products" is regarded as a fundamental method for universities to gain competitive advantage. Since communication is strategically important for education, strategies for better communication have begun to be implemented in the universities (Table 1).

Providing a quality university education is also of great significance in Turkey. Practices for increasing quality in education must be encouraged because quality plays a critical role in competitive advantage. According to Table 1, 28,9% of the universities have increased their quality and strengthened their accreditation. In recent years, the quality-oriented education system in the universities is of great importance for both international policies and the internalization of the accreditation studies. For that reason, implementing the necessary quality standards both nationally and internationally is a very powerful way of triggering competitive advantage at the universities. As the implementation of these standards coincides with the expectations for quality in higher education, shareholder satisfaction will be achieved in many fields. This compatibility is only possible with the provision from concrete components of universities to the capabilities, from attitudes and context to the reliabilities (Table 1).

Universities are at the forefront of technological developments and the adaptation of them to real life, as well as the transfer of theoretical knowledge from education to industry. Universities are also critical institutions for establishing a bridge between education and industry through the research, development, and implementation of new technologies (Buget, 1996, p.34). In conjunction with the issue of developing technology, it is compulsory that policies be made that allow public universities to have technological facilities that provide services to students. Fundamentally, the technology programs found in most universities, the electronic registration systems, and the online course selection enhance students' lives. 30,0% of the universities in our study put an emphasis on their "technological student affairs". Considering the rapid pace in the development of technology and technology's goal-oriented idealism, it is essential that we use these programs and automation systems in other fields (Table 1).

Another strength of the universities that is related to students is the "active students clubs". Universities revealed that 23,3% of them meet the need for student clubs. Via clubs, which can be regarded as an arena for student activity, students develop their capabilities in

"leadership, management, and team spirit". Student clubs constitute the social sphere of education at universities and are an advantage to them. Students clubs and their activities are also mentioned in the higher education strategy and must be implemented by universities (Table 1).

The percentage of the universities that emphasize lifelong learning centers and certification work is 20%. Thanks to these centers, universities provide study in different fields through "courses, seminars, and conferences" and award certificates to students. These activities make lifelong learning centers attractive. Additionally, 20% percent of the universities are successful in updating their curricula. Updating courses on the basis of contexts, in other words providing curricula that serve various sectors, will pave the way for students to become well-qualified. Programs and curricula that are continually being updated are advantageous for the development of students socially as well as educationally (Table 1).

The percentage of the universities that regard a strong infrastructure in foreign language education as important is 17,8%. "English prep classes," which are so prevalent in the public universities, are the most important tool of foreign language education. These prep classes, which improve students' foreign language skills, are obligatory in the technical, health, and social fields. 11% percent of the universities are effective in their implementations of European-quality credit systems. The transfer of European-oriented science and culture from member states to Turkey results in socio-political and cultural advantages as well as financial ones. In this context, the Process of Bologna, ECTS studies, and the standardization of diplomas require that we treat differences in a standardized way. Services that are in line with quality standards will be useful in gaining competitive advantage for both national and intentional students. In recent years, with the implementations of international education policies and standards, endeavors for compatibility with international quality standards started. Educating the students with courses that coordinate with international programs is the most important indicator of these efforts. Obtaining quality in each field will enhance competitive advantage as well (Table 1).

The percentage of the universities that provide scholarships and part-time work is 8,9%, which can be regarded as low. This criterion, in which the universities judged themselves as strong, shows that these services are inadequate for the students economically. Giving priority to application-based programs in the public universities can be regarded as a sort of strength for them. 6,7% of the universities found application-centered programs an advantage (Table 1).

On the other hand, 56,7% of the universities considers that fewer students per academician is an advantage that has a great impact on research and development because the fewer the students per academic staff member enhances the service quality offered (sharing time among students, close communication, etc.) and does not restrict time for academic research. The percentage of the universities that views student satisfaction as a strength is 5,6%. The majority of graduate students believe that one function of a university is to provide a type of network, which is one of their criteria for student satisfaction.. We can safely say that the universities that view student satisfaction as a strength are rare and do not reflect the general (Table 1).

Table 2.

The Weaknesses of Public Universities in Education

Weaknesses	Frequency		Total	Percentage (%)		Total %
	Yes	No		Yes	No	
Inadequate communication with graduate students	41	49	**90**	45,6	54,4	**100**
Inadequacy of social services	41	49	**90**	45,6	54,4	**100**
Scarcity of health, culture, and sports facilities	34	56	**90**	37,8	62,2	**100**
Inadequacy of foreign language education	32	58	**90**	35,6	64,4	**100**
Inadequacy of libraries	29	61	**90**	32,2	67,8	**100**
Scarcity of graduate programs	23	67	**90**	25,6	74,4	**100**
Scarcity of psychological counseling and guidance services	21	69	**90**	23,3	76,7	**100**
Lack of a career center	18	72	**90**	20,0	80,0	**100**
Inadequacy of scholarship support to students	16	74	**90**	17,8	82,2	**100**
Inadequacy of implementation-oriented education	15	75	**90**	16,7	83,3	**100**
Inadequacy of educational materials	13	77	**90**	14,4	85,6	**100**

The highest percentage among the weaknesses in the universities is the "lack of communication with graduate students". Universities state that 45,6% of them have difficulty in establishing communication with their graduate students, a problem that can be prevented through "counseling services for graduate students, continuity of interaction with graduates, following graduates, and gaining advantage from graduates". Interaction and cooperation with graduates and following up on them are of great importance to universities. With regard to communication in higher education, we note that the lack of communication with graduate students suggests a lack of communication with external shareholders. At this point, we feel that the importance of an interactional style of communication with internal shareholders, as well as external ones, should be considered (Table 2).

Other weaknesses determined as a result of the study are the inadequacy of areas for social events, at 45,6%, and the scarcity of health, culture, and sports facilities, at 37,8%. These weaknesses could stem from the fact that public universities possess a limited amount of space and a limited number of physical facilities, which is a disadvantage that results from space being taken up by health, counseling, internship, and social services. Enhancing social and cultural activities that appeal to students increases the quality of life at universities. However, the weakness in this area for public universities is the lack of space and physical

facilities, a problem that means that public universities must revise their policies on this issue (Table 2).

Moreover, 35,6% of public universities specified that "inadequacy of foreign language education" is a weakness for them that stems from a university offering instruction in only a preferred foreign language. However, public universities in general do not offer enough foreign language education. In Turkey, the universities that meet the requirements for foreign language education are the private ones. Thus, our study indicates that increasing foreign language education in the public universities will attract students (Table 2).

To tie back into our topic of educating students for the modern age, we promote the idea that students need to have adequate physical facilities, modern laboratories, libraries, and technological opportunities. Providing these services enhances the quality of education. However, 32,2% of public universities mention that they have inadequate library facilities. There are few books, which are the most important tools of research and development, and most of the universities do not subscribe to an adequate number or variety of academic journals. Finding concrete solutions to the inadequacy of these resources, both qualitatively and quantitatively, would be beneficial for research and development activities and for the student improvement as well (Table 2).

In spite of the fact that graduate studies are so prevalent, programs for graduate studies in our universities are too limited. Undergraduate studies are given priority because of an increase in the young population, a situation that has been studied under the title "Scarcity of graduate programs". As the academic and technological infrastructures are considered for the MA, MS, MBA, and PhD programs, universities must place an emphasis on developing the capacity and diversity needed for graduate programs (Table 2).

Another educational need at the universities is "counseling services". However, the percentage of universities that voice their concerns over the inadequacy of counseling services is only 23,3%. Offering qualified psychological counseling and guidance programs to students will improve the students' lives socially, as well as psychologically. In addition, career centers are the places that encourage students toward a particular path or career by means of their capabilities. 20% percent of the public universities do not have career centers, which results in the vicious cycle of career planning studies. All of these things mentioned must be considered well in advance of higher education strategy planning (Table 2).

In the category of strengths, the number of universities that mention the presence of scholarship opportunities is limited. So, according to Table 2, 17,8% of public university administrations are concerned about scholarship opportunities, which appears as the second weakness following budget deficiency (the budgets given to universities are not enough to support them). Thus, giving adequate support to students financially through scholarship opportunities is crucial (Table 2).

Lastly, the other important points mentioned are "inadequacy of implicational studies" and "inadequacy of educational materials". The universities of developed countries attach particular importance to innovation since they do not have many restrictions on educational materials and laboratory facilities. Therefore, enhancing implicational studies would be a great advantage for Turkish universities. Offering students internships, establishing ties with industrial liaisons, and giving priority to practice rather than theory can all contribute to the development of implicational studies (Table 2).

Table 3.

Opportunities in Public Universities

Opportunities	Frequency		Total	Percentage (%)		Total %
	Yes	No		Yes	No	
Exchange programs	53	37	**90**	58,9	41,1	**100**
Bologna Process	19	71	**90**	21,1	78,9	**100**
International student demands	16	74	**90**	17,8	82,2	**100**
Opportunity for distance education	15	75	**90**	16,7	83,3	**100**

One of the opportunities that the universities seek is progress in international cooperation. Within the scope of Erasmus, a great many students go to other countries to receive an education because there are plenty of researchers who take part in research projects (Senatalar, 2008, p. 359-361). 58,9% of the public universities in Turkey regard these exchange programs as an opportunity. This need is also highlighted in the Bologna Process. The student and academic staff exchange that began with the Erasmus Program – and the European identity that resulted from this program – is the standard suggestion for knowledge sharing that has developed new approaches and perspectives in education. The European-originated scientific and cultural heritage leads to financial, socio-political, and cultural contributions to Turkey. In this context, ECTS works with the Bologna Process and the standardization of diplomas entails the restructuring of differences in a standardized way (Tatlidil, 2009, p.331). Furthermore, 17,8% of the universities take international exchange programs into account and consider the demands of having international students an opportunity (Table 3).

Parallel to the changes in the development and sharing of knowledge, as well the means of applying them to practical and future life, the methods of acquiring education have also changed. Some traditional applications started to change with the Internet and the network that it offers. "Distance learning" can be numbered among the advantages for students since this type of education becomes an activity that is free of any limit, building, or campus. Thus, without going to schools, the students can get certificates and diplomas via distance education (Bayrak and Senis, 2009, p.32-33). The percentage of the universities that consider this method as a kind of advantage is 16,7% (Table 3).

Table 4.

Educational Threats to Public Universities

Threats	Frequency		Total	Percentage (%)		Total %
	Yes	No		Yes	No	
The presence of other universities	44	46	**90**	48,9	51,1	**100**
The increasing number of private universities	38	52	**90**	42,2	57,8	**100**
Changes in the laws and regulations	22	68	**90**	24,4	75,6	**100**
Inadequacy in the number of dormitories	22	68	**90**	24,4	75,6	**100**
Inadequacy of social life in the provinces	21	69	**90**	23,3	76,7	**100**
The problem of employment	19	71	**90**	21,1	78,9	**100**
Low quality of secondary school education	17	73	**90**	18,9	81,1	**100**
Student admission to vocational schools without any exam	15	75	**90**	16,7	83,3	**100**
The factor of earthquakes	9	81	**90**	10,0	90,0	**100**

An increasing number of the universities in Turkey have also accelerated their efforts to compete, and the universities are now in rivalry with one another. 48,9% of the public universities regard the preferences of other universities as a risk for them. Private universities in Turkey, established according to the 130 Article of the Constitution, are seen by the public universities as a risk as well. For 42,2% of the public universities, the increasing number of private universities is a risk for them because the private universities offer alluring opportunities to the student candidates. 24,4% of the universities regard laws and regulations as a type of threat since the foundations of these universities were aligned with these legal systems. To put it clearly, the related articles of Higher Education Law 2547 affect the education at the universities, so they are a sort of risk (Table 4).

Another threat is the scarcity of "accommodations facilities". 24,4% of the universities mention the scarcity of dormitories, which is significant because accommodations are a sinequanon of student life. As for the inadequacy of social activities in the provinces, 23,3% of the universities state that it poses a risk for university education in Turkey because social mobility in the cities and social activities play a critical role in student preferences (Table 4).

21,1% of the universities reveal that the students' future employment opportunities are a particular risk for them. Fluctuations in the economy and changes in economic policy influence not only the universities but also the country as a whole. These changes can be viewed as a threat because they create instability within the job market (Table 4).

Low-quality education in the secondary schools is seen as another threat to universities. The central exam for the placement of students has been used in Turkey for many years. But, central exams have been harshly criticized because they create a harsh rivalry among the students and furnish some private institutions with unearned money. Another drawback of this system is the practice of guiding a student toward a particular field or career that becomes compulsory for the student. 16,7% of the universities regard "Student Admission to Vocational Schools Without Any Exam" as a threat, which can be interpreted as a statement that open admission to some vocational schools decreases the quality of education (Table 4).

Lastly, 10% of the public universities stated that their geographical locations are risky because of earthquakes. Most people like to live in the cities that are geographically convenient and far from the risk of earthquakes. Therefore, students tend to prefer universities in the cities located away from earthquake regions (Table 4).

Discussion and Conclusions

The primary aim of this study is to reveal the strengths and the weaknesses of the current situation of public universities in Turkey and to assess their conditions within the framework of higher education strategy and within this framework, content analysis as a sort of qualitative method, was used.

The research is qualitative in nature and includes observation, interview, and document analysis. In this qualitative research, content analysis which is used to reveal the objective, measurable, and verifiable explanations of the communications, which are explicit and concrete (Fiske, 1990, p.176) was used because the analysis contains oral and written materials, which were categorized by message objectives. Then, these messages were systematically converted into numbers (Tavsancil & Aslan, 2001, p.22).

Depending on the data obtained, one third of the universities stated that "diversity of the programs, increase in social activities, close interaction between academician and student, and increasing quality and accreditation" are their strengths. In spite of its low degree, these universities implemented strategies for educational activities, social activities, the enhancement of life culture, and communication that were mentioned in the strategy of the Higher Education Council which is in line with the results conducted on the American universities that suggest facilities to their students through student clubs like leadership opportunity, social activities, travelling and sport event opportunity (Lombardini, 2001: 2-14, 5).

As for the weaknesses of the public universities in Turkey, "inadequacy of interaction with graduate students; inadequacy of social fields; lack of health, culture, and sport facilities; inadequacy of foreign language education; inadequacy of libraries; scarcity of graduate programs; inadequacy of psychological counseling and guidance services; inadequacy of scholarship support,; scarcity of implementation-oriented studies; and inadequacy of education materials" can be included in this category. All of these problems can only be reversed through the implementation of higher education strategies.

Considering the universities in Europa, international cooperation is very important for the vision of the university (Senatalar, 2008: 359). Virtually all of the universities regard exchange programs as a kind of advantage, and so they focus on "Bologna Process and Exchange" strategies. The mobility of students and academicians in recent years and educational activities that are in line with European standards are the particular indicators of

success in these areas. The increasing number of state and private universities is seen as a threat, a concern that can only be resolved through the correct implementation of higher education strategies at the right time.

Based on the data and its interpretations, we can safely state that higher education strategies are only partly implemented in Turkey, and new strategies need to be developed for physical facilities, communication, social activities and life culture, student clubs and activities, scholarship and part-time work opportunities, the applications of different types of education, and the Bologna Process".

Compared to other universities in the world, European universities put greater stress on exchange programs and the development of international cooperation. American universities have seen significant improvement in "advertisement, research, the quality of students, and faculty positions." And, Asian universities have attempted to increase their research funds as well as the number and quality of their academicians. The universities in all three of these areas can be taken as examples by Turkish universities.

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Yükseköğretim Stratejisi Çerçevesinde Kamu Üniversitelerinin Eğitim Faaliyetlerinin Değerlendirilmesi:
Türkiye Örneği

Atıf:

Özet

Problem Durumu: Çalışmada bilimsel özerkliğe ve kamu tüzel kişiliğine sahip üniversitelerin Eğitim-öğretim alanında üstünlükleri, zayıf oldukları alanlar, Eğitimde fırsat olarak gördükleri noktalar ve Eğitime yönelik tehditleri araştırılmıştır.

Araştırmanın Amacı: Bu araştırmanın amacı Türkiye'deki kamu üniversitelerinin Eğitim-öğretim faaliyetlerinin mevcut durumunu tespit etmek, elde edilen bulgularla, Türkiye'nin Yükseköğretim stratejisinde yer alan Eğitim öğretim stratejileri ile karşılaştırmaktır. Elde edilen bulgularla Türkiye' deki kamu üniversitelerinin Eğitim alan stratejileri, Türkiye Yükseköğretim Stratejisi çerçevesinde tartışılmış, Eğitim alan stratejilerine yönelik değerlendirmeler ve öneriler sunulmuştur.

Araştırmanın Yöntemi: Araştırmada, yöntem olarak nitel analiz tekniklerinden biri olan içerik analizi kullanılmıştır. Türkiye'de faaliyetlerini sürdüren toplamda 103 kamu üniversitesinden 90'ının stratejik planına bu analiz uygulanmıştır. Stratejik planlarda yer alan "SWOT analizi" bölümleri araştırmanın analiz birimlerini oluşturmaktadır. İçerik analizi, bir metindeki değişkenleri ölçmek amacıyla sistematik, tarafsız ve araştırmacı tarafından istenirse verileri sayısallaştırarak da yapılabilen analizdir. Analizde, araştırmacılar tarafından, alan yazın destekli kodlama yönergesi hazırlanmış ve 90 üniversitenin stratejik planlarından yer alan "SWOT Analizi" bölümlerinden elde edilen veriler bu yönergeye göre SPSS'te kodlanmış, frekans ve yüzdelikleri hesaplanarak bulgular incelenmiştir.

Araştırmanın Sonuçları ve Öneriler: Araştırmanın bulguları güçlü yönlere yönelik "program çeşitliliği, sosyal faaliyet artışı, öğrenci-akademisyen yakın iletişimi, kalite ve akreditasyonun artması"; zayıf yönlere ilişkin "mezunlarla iletişim yetersizliği, sosyal alan yetersizliği, sağlık kültür spor olanaklarının yetersizliği, yabancı dilde Eğitim yetersizliği, kütüphane yetersizliği, lisansüstü program sayısı azlığı, öğrenciye dönük rehberlik hizmeti yetersizliği, burs desteğinin azlığı, uygulamalı Eğitimlerin azlığı, Eğitim materyal yetersizliği"; fırsat alanı olarak "değişim programları" ; tehdit olarak da "diğer kamu ve vakıf üniversitelerindeki artış" ları şeklinde çıkmıştır.

Buna göre araştırmanın bulguları değerlendirildiğinde, üniversitelerin güçlü yan olarak belirttikleri kriterlerin Yükseköğretim stratejilerinden "Eğitim alanı, sosyal etkinlik ve yaşam kültürü, iletişim" stratejilerine uygun olduğu söylenebilir. Bu stratejileri kısmen dikkate aldıkları düşünülebilir. Amerikan üniversitelerinin kulüpler vasıtasıyla öğrencilerine liderlik fırsatı sunmaları, sosyal aktivite, seyahat fırsatları ve spor fırsatları sunmaları (Lombardini, 2001, p.5) burada Türkiye üniversiteleri için örnek alınabilir. Üniversitelerin özellikle dile getirdikleri zayıf yanlar, Yükseköğretim stratejisinde de yer aldığı şekliyle "fiziki imkânlar,

iletişim, sosyal etkinlikler ve yaşam kültürü, burs ve part-time iş imkânları, öğrenci memnuniyeti, Eğitim uygulamaları" stratejileri ile güçlü hale getirilebilir. Bu zayıf yönlere ilişkin geliştirilecek bu stratejik boyutlar kamu üniversitelerini daha güçlü hale getirebilir. Günümüzde Alman Üniversitelerinden etkilenerek büyük gelişme gösteren Amerikan üniversitelerinin rekabet çevresini, seçkin öğrenciler, fakülte konumları, araştırma olanakları ve öğretim biçimleri oluşturmaktadır (Lombardini, 2001, p.2-14). Üniversitelerin neredeyse yarısının fırsat olarak gördüğü değişim programları da Yükseköğretimin "Bologna süreci ve değişim" stratejisine uygundur. Özellikle öğrenci-akademisyen değişimlerinin yurt dışı üniversitelerle yapılması, üniversiteleri Avrupa standartlarında Eğitim statüsüne taşıyacaktır. Zaten bugün Avrupa üniversitelerine bakıldığında bu üniversitelerde de uluslararası işbirliklerinin artırılması bir fırsat olarak görülmektedir (Senatalar, 2008, p.359).

Tehdit olarak görülen alanlarda ise "diğer kamu ve vakıf üniversitelerindeki artış"lar ifade edilmiştir. Rekabet ortamında üniversitelerin rekabetten kaçması mümkün olmayacağı için, rekabet stratejilerini geliştirmesi ve bunu Egitim öğretim stratejileriyle bütünleştirmesi önemli bir hamle olacaktır. Bu noktada da özellikle kısa ve uzun vadeli değişim programlarının Asya ve Afrika ülkelerine yoğunlaşarak devam etmesi önerilebilir zira hem Asya hem de Afrika Yuksekogretim öğrencileri bugün dışarıdaki üniversiteleri tercih etmektedirler (El Samani ve El Saheikh, 2007, p.2-6). Araştırmanın bulgularından ve genel değerlendirme ve yorumlardan yola çıkılarak, araştırmaya dâhil olan kamu üniversitelerinin mevcut durumları, Yuksekogretim stratejilerinin "kısmen" uygulandığı sonucunu ortaya çıkarmıştır. Fiziki imkânlar, iletişim, sosyal etkinlikler ve yaşam kültürü, öğrenci toplulukları ve faaliyetleri, burs ve part-time iş imkânları, farklı Egitim uygulamaları, Bologna süreci kapsamında Egitim-öğretim faaliyetlerinin geliştirilmesi gerektiğini bu çalışmanın sonuçlarına göre Turkiye'deki kamu üniversitelerine önerilebilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Egitim, Orgut, Stratejik Plan,Üniversite SWOT Analizi